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Durban is all about colour! A rich cultural tapestry, woven with the multicoloured fabric of the nation, can be found in numerous museums and art galleries within the city. Our Inanda Heritage Route allows a visit to some of Durban’s most important historical sites. Here, you can browse and buy the stunning handiwork of some of Durban’s most talented emerging or established local artists

CULINARY

Durban’s diverse cultures are shown in its amazing selection of cuisine setting it apartfrom any other city in South Africa. Try visit Florida Road , Chartwell Drive, Davenport and our famous Bunny Chow made with a traditional curry, or venture to a Shisa Nyama for an authentic local taste. Fine Dining, and silver service - Durban has it all!

Visit Durban to experience all it has to offer! Come enjoy the sea, sand and sunrise, but don’t forget your masks, social distance and sanitize

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THE HEALING POWER OF TRAVEL

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT LIFE IS GOING TO THROW AT YOU. A WINTER HOLIDAY HELPS YOU BUILD YOUR STRENGTH, WHETHER YOU HURTLE INTO THE ELEMENTS OR COSY UP INDOORS

In March 2021, the brakes on my husband Alex's bike failed as he was riding down Chapman's Peak towards Noordhoek, causing it to momentarily leave the ground and then crash-land on its right side, dragging him violently across the tarmac and smashing him into the wall on the opposite side of the road.

A fellow cyclist phoned me, and I rushed to the scene, where an ambulance crew had arrived. Alex was conscious, even joking – must've been the morphine – paramedics had wrapped a bandage around his head, ketchup-red blood was splattered on his helmet, and the front wheel of his bike was a crumpled mess of misshapen spokes. Though his injuries were severe, a smashed shoulder and a starfish-shaped tear on his forehead requiring surgery among them, the good news was that he'd fully recover.

Our family live in the UK, and due to Covid-19 travel restrictions at the time, they couldn't physically support us, which made Alex's slow, frustrating recovery all the more traumatic.

We'd planned an all-inclusive holiday to Zanzibar that June but decided to postpone it as Alex couldn't move his arm far enough to snorkel with dolphins safely. But we needed *something* to help us heal.

Instead of escaping winter, we decided to embrace the season in South Africa by staying in two off-grid farm cottages. Alex poured so much love into the comfort food he prepared for our breakaway: slow-cooked lamb, tzatziki and pita bread, lasagne and seafood curry.

I remember leaving the motorway, our car bumping awkwardly along farm roads before reaching Orange Grove Farm in Robertson. Pulling into the driveway of our cottage, Mosesberg, we switched off the engine to buzzing silence. High on a ridge, far from civilisation, we saw endless olive groves, vineyards, mountains and valleys. Here, we were free from all of life's demands to be present.

For the next week, we went for long, easy runs, meditated, slept as much as we needed to and, most importantly, really talked about and processed our trauma, allowing us to heal.

The great thing about South Africa during winter is that you still get those odd days when the temperature reaches the mid-20s. On one such day, we lounged by our private plunge pool at Mosesberg, reading. And at our second accommodation, Black Eagle Lodges in Caledon, the weather turned cold, so we bunkered down for a duvet day beside a hypnotic, crackling fireplace and, in the evening, cracked open a bottle of MCC and jumped in a steaming wood-fired hot tub, witnessing the rain come down in sheets beyond the terrace.

We visited the wacky Dassiesfontein farm stall in Caledon to browse its random array of stuff for sale, vases, sheepskin-lined boots, stopped the car to allow wild horses to cross a Greyton street and sipped wine while cruising down the river at family-run wine farm Viljoensdrift in Robertson.

Winter escapes mean something different to everyone. In this issue, Mart-Marié du Toit recommends three local restaurants where you can try mouthwatering European dishes without having to leave the country (p 40), and photojournalist Jacques Marais hit the elements head-on to discover Mzansi's top (secret) MTB trails (p 78).

Wherever you go this winter, make sure it's restorative, life-affirming and one for the memory bank.

LISA ABDELLAH

lisa.abdellah@habarimedia.com
@ thenorthernrunner

This photo was taken on a boat cruising down the river at Viljoensdrift wine farm in Robertson during a winter getaway that helped my husband Alex and me smile again after he suffered a traumatic cycling accident.

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ON OUR COVER

Simone Sharpe rides through the De Hoop Nature Reserve at dawn.

Getaway

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Jacques Marais

TOP (SECRET) MOUNTAIN-BIKE TRAILS (P 78)

Jacques Marais began his media career with the SABC. He has since become a respected outdoor photojournalist contributing to a wide range of local and international publications, and is at his happiest while exploring southern Africa's most remote and breathtaking spaces. At home, he bravely vies for his family's love and attention, but has made peace with the fact that he will always play second fiddle to Norman, the long-legged dachshund. Follow him on @ **jacqmaraisphoto**

Elise Kirsten

WHALES AND THINGS (P 104)

Elise has enjoyed many travel adventures as a freelance photojournalist and former *Getaway* staffer. Some of these include sipping tea in Taiwan and tracking cheetahs on foot in the Karoo. She is happiest when she's exploring nature, whether it's on foot, on her mountain bike, by boat or in a safari vehicle. She has a keen interest in conservation, especially when it relates to the ocean. Her love of the sea and its creatures meant that she was in her element at De Hoop Nature Reserve last whale season. Follow her on @ **elisekirsten**

Mart-Marié du Toit

FOOD THAT TRANSPORTS YOU TO EUROPE (P 40)

Chef-turned-food-stylist-turned-journalist, but mainly described as always thinking about food, Mart-Marié decides her next destination based on which foods she can experience there. But her favourite meal has to be the roosterkoek and !Nabas (Kalahari truffles) served by Aunt Koera in her veld restaurant at the Khomani San village near Askham one chilly morning. Travelling with her husband, and their toddler, who doesn't like food as much as her mother, they experience parts of lesser-travelled South Africa and the UK, tasting their way through it all. Follow her on @ **dutoitmm**

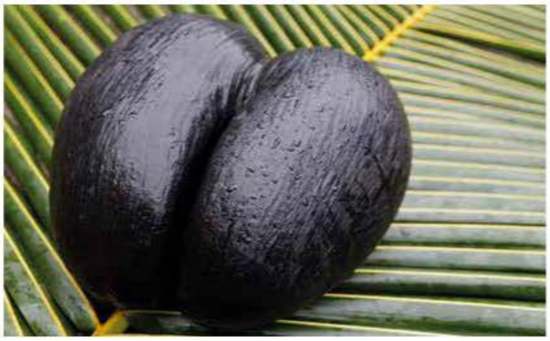
Graeme Green

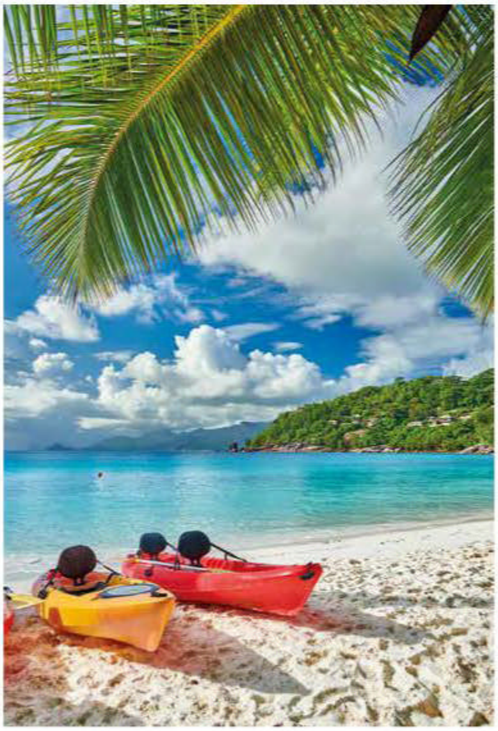
ALL CREATURES, GREAT AND SMALL (P 60)

Graeme Green is a British photojournalist and author. He has covered wildlife, conservation and environmental issues in countries including Rwanda, India, Peru and Japan, and is the founder of the New Big 5 project, an international conservation initiative supported by more than 300 of the world's photographers, conservationists and wildlife charities, and the author of *The New Big 5* book (Earth Aware Editions), which featured the work of 146 globally renowned photographers and essays by Jane Goodall, Paula Kahumbu (WildlifeDirect) and others, raising awareness about endangered species.

graeme-green.com

The Seychelles Islands





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WEEKEND RESET

HONEY, CLEAR MY SCHEDULE

EXPLORE YOUR TOWN, ONE EVENT AT A TIME

UB40 FEATURING ALI CAMPBELL

1–2 June
DURBAN ICC

–

The band that introduced reggae music to Europe and brought it into your home with hits like *Red, Red Wine* and *(I Can't Help) Falling in love With You* is coming to South Africa. And while many South Africans bemoan the fact that all the big stars only visit Cape Town and Johannesburg, UB40 are coming to you, Durban!

Ali Campbell, legendary lead singer of UB40, is back with the band and ready to rock us with iconic reggae pop music everyone can enjoy. Catch them live at the Durban ICC on Thursday 1 June and Friday 2 June.

'We'll always play the classics but we like to change the beginning and end of the show,' said Campbell. 'We'll play *Lean On Me* and maybe add three or four new songs. The band members are all fantastic musicians and we've climbed back up to the biggest venues in the past 12 years.'

Tickets:
From R795 (selling out fast)
Available at *ticketmaster.co.za*

THE COMRADES MARATHON EXPO AND RACE

8–10 June
DURBAN EXHIBITION CENTRE

–

Durban! Twice in one month? Surely not? But yes, how could we not mention the Comrades? The Comrades Expo is not just about collecting race numbers, goodie bags and the must-have race T-shirt. It's about soaking up the pre-race atmosphere, stocking up on race-day essentials, and all the latest news in lifestyle, sport, health and nutrition. The event caters for all sports enthusiasts, families supporting their runners and the newbie athlete aspiring to be on the start line one day. Businesses can meet potential customers and expose their products and brands to an enthusiastic and diverse audience.

8 June, from 10am–7pm
9 June, from 9am–7pm
10 June, from 9am–4pm

Meanwhile, the race, arguably SA's most iconic, will take place on Sunday 11 June, starting at 5.30am and finishing at 5.30pm.

It is a 'down run' starting at the City Hall in Pietermaritzburg and finishing in Durban. The race distance is approximately 90km.

Details:
www.comrades.com,
info@comrades.com,
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CAPITAL CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL

17 June

PRETORIA NATIONAL BOTANICAL GARDENS

–

Uniting the capital's beer and music lovers in the beautiful Pretoria National Botanical Gardens, this year's festival will feature the country's favourite craft brewers, an abundance of entertainment for all musical tastes and a diverse selection of food.

The Capital Craft Beer Festival (CCBF) has, for the past 10 years, been one of Pretoria's most spectacular, unforgettable and well-executed social events, while celebrating the local beer industry and enhancing the flavour of good food, good times and good friends! Over 40 brewers will attend.

Among those performing at the event are Jeremy Loops, Die Heuwels Fantasties, Boo!, Koos Kombuis, Shadowclub and Lebo Ditsepu.

Have young kids? Clamber Club is offering awesome children's entertainment, so they can join, too. Their fully trained, fun-filled entertainers are fantastic with children and will keep them happily occupied while parents enjoy the festival. A Clamber Club ticket is compulsory for all 2 to 12-year-olds (R155), but take note: no 13 to 17-year-olds are allowed to attend the event.

Tickets: From R155
Available at *capitalcraft.co.za*

NAKED HIKE FOR MEN

24-26 June

QWAQWA, FREE STATE

–

Calling all men of all races who are willing to challenge themselves to overcome insecurities, face freezing temperatures in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains in winter and rise above their limitations.

For many, the highlight of the hike is the emotion it evokes. Organiser Fanafikile Lephaka says that the hike challenges men to overcome their insecurities.

'Some men have body issues they don't talk about. It terrifies them to think others will find out about anything that's "not normal" with them. So, by being nude, you are forced to get over that insecurity and be okay with being yourself.'

Lephaka also clarified that attendees will only be naked during the three-hour hike on Saturday 25 June.

Tickets: R2 500 pp (includes a tent, meals, location fees and facilitation). For more info, call 082 228 9272

IMPOSSIBLE MAGIC SHOW

3-4 June

ARTSCAPE THEATRE, CAPE TOWN

–

Check out IMPOSSIBLE, a spectacular show that will showcase the jaw-dropping skills of the talented graduates and students from the College of Magic. From grand illusions to daring stunts, comedy to sleight-of-hand magic tricks, this show has something for everyone! Be mesmerized by the exceptional performers who have showcased their skills all over the world, from Austria, China, Italy to a recent feature on *60 Minutes* in the US. Witness a modern recreation of Houdini's suspended, death-defying upside-down straitjacket escape – a first for the Artscape stage! Book your tickets now via Webtickets for either 3 or 4 June and enjoy a non-stop show packed with thrilling and sophisticated modern magic. You won't want to miss it!

THIS SIDE UP

Tickets:
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Snapshot

WHERE ON EARTH?

THE ANNUAL MITAMA MATSURI SUMMER FESTIVAL WILL BE HELD AT YASUKUNI SHRINE IN TOKYO, JAPAN, FROM 13–16 JULY

PHOTOGRAPHY TOMOHIRO OHSUMI/GETTY IMAGES

Light Symbolises Souls

A visitor walks past lit paper lanterns during the Mitama Matsuri summer festival at the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, Japan last year. About 30 000 lanterns are displayed during the four-day traditional festival taking place during Tokyo's Bon period in July. The controversial Shinto shrine is dedicated to the souls of about 2.5 million Japanese men, women and children who died for their country.

Japan
Tokyo

TWO FULL DAYS

HOEDSPRUIT, THE HEART OF THE LOWVELD

48 HOURS IS JUST ENOUGH TIME TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THIS SLEEPY LOWVELD TOWN

Words **Lauren Dold**

MJ's Photo & Video
STOP
STOP

A flash flood, a lost hat and a railway line; humble beginnings has Hoedspruit. Now on every safari-goer's radar, Hoedspruit was once an obscure little Lowveld town with not much in the way of entertainment, besides the old Fort Coepieba pub where a local or two were known to shoot the clock at closing time. But its proximity to the Kruger National Park, the Blyde River Canyon, and the rest of the Greater Kruger and Lowveld make it the perfect place to spend the weekend, en route to the Kruger or not.

Hoedspruit was named by Dawid Johannes Joubert in 1844, the owner of the farm where the town is now. He decided this after a massive cloudburst over the catchment area near Mariepskop, what is now called the Zandspruit River, caused a flash flood that took his hat with it. To lose a hat in 1844 was a big deal, especially for a farmer in the Lowveld. He was so upset at his loss that he named his farm Hoedspruit (Hat Stream or Creek) after the river that stole it.

Though still a mecca for would-be and hardened game rangers, Hoedspruit has become one of South Africa's fastest-growing towns, under constant expansion and development. It hasn't lost its sleepy Lowveld charm, though. Hoedspruit's unofficial mascot is the warthog, and the town has many, including a sounder of urban pigs who prefer to snooze under cars at the mechanic's rather than forage in the wildlife estates. The local golf course is overrun with wildlife, the children go barefoot (as do some of the older townsfolk) and if someone tells you that you drink like a girl, it's a compliment.

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The main street in Hoedspruit; five stop streets and no traffic lights.

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Hoedspruit, Limpopo

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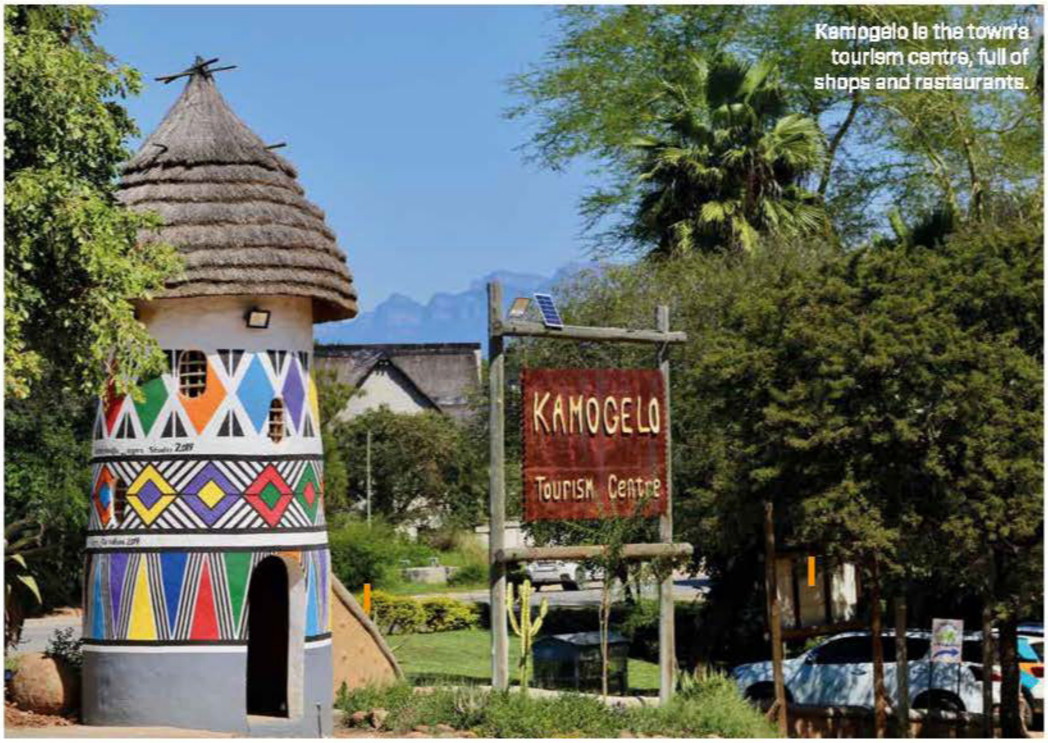
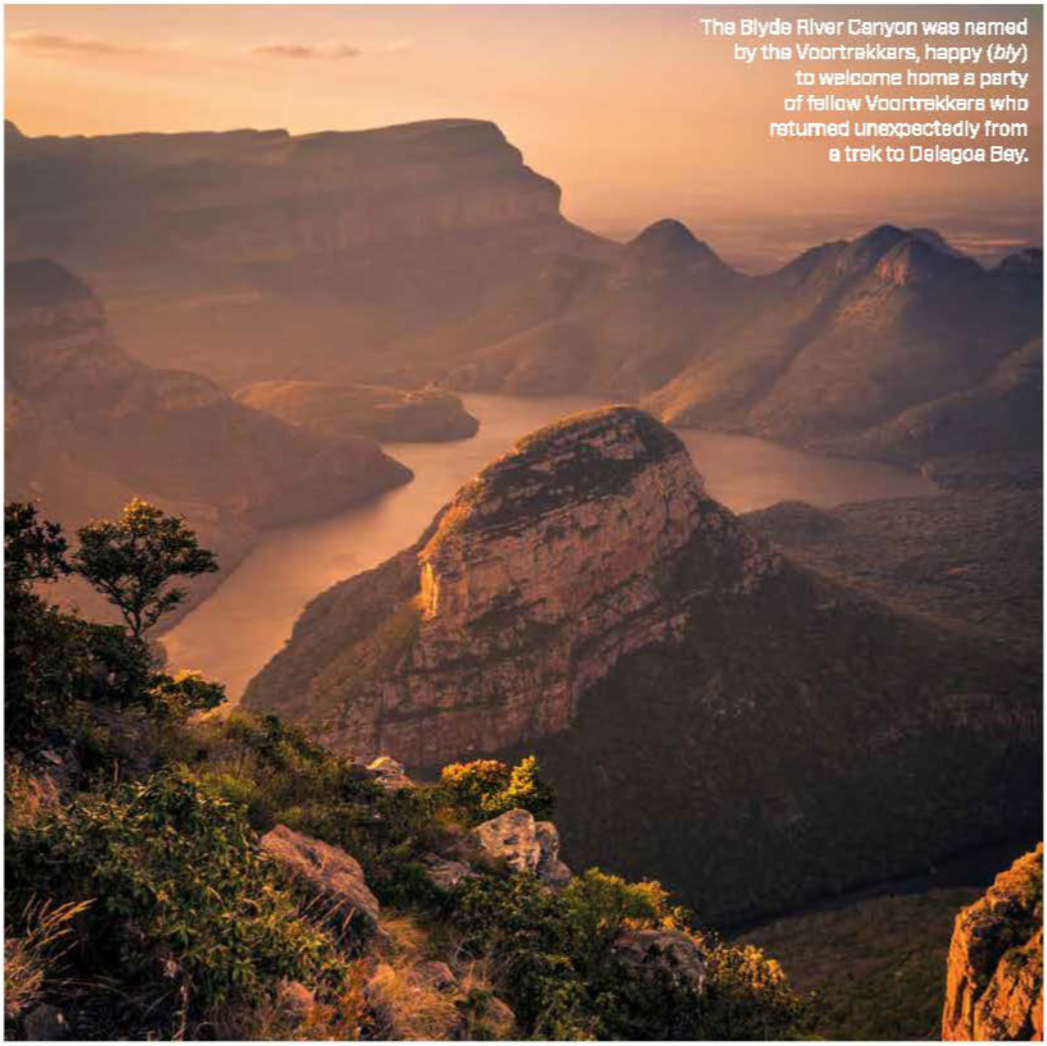


Kamogelo is the town's tourism centre, full of shops and restaurants.



The Blyde River Canyon was named by the Voortrekkers, happy (*bly*) to welcome home a party of fellow Voortrekkers who returned unexpectedly from a trek to Delagoa Bay.

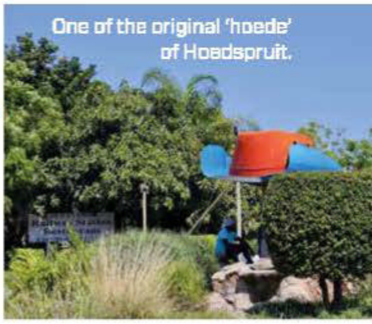
DAY 1

Take a Hike

The rolling Blyde River Canyon is only a 40km drive from Hoedspruit, and there is no shortage of things to do in and around the canyon. It's the largest green canyon on Earth and the third-largest canyon in the world, and it's practically Hoedspruit's backyard. The closest waterfall is just off the road after crossing the Blyde River, is only a 2km hike away, which children will do easily, and has a glorious natural pool to swim in. You could do this, take a scenic cruise around the Blyde Dam with Blyde Canyon Safaris and be back in the Hoed for a late afternoon lunch. Visit Hoedspruit Brewing Co for the best wood-fired pizza in town and a cold draught.
060 970 7771

Blyde Canyon Safaris offers daily trips at 7am, 9am, 11am, 1pm and 3pm, each lasting an hour and a half. Tickets cost R290 for adults and R170 for children (2–12 years old)
blydecanyonsafaris.com

A boat cruise on the dam.



One of the original 'hoede' of Hoedspruit.

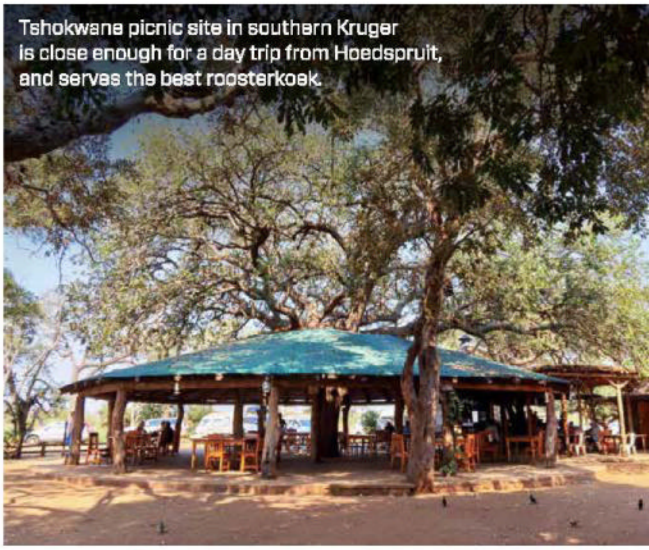
DAY 2

Head to Kruger

Hoedspruit is equidistant between Kruger's Orpen Gate and Phalaborwa Gate. It takes an hour either way, so if you leave early you could be firing up your skottel and fighting off hornbills by brunch time. The picnic sites have skottels for rent for around R30, so all you need to bring is your eggs, your bacon and your binoculars. Conservation fees are R115 per adult and R57 per child, unless you have a Wild Card. You could spend the entire day in Kruger or head back into town for sundowners and supper. Three Bridges restaurant on the Olifants River has an outdoor deck that faces the water, the ideal place to sip on a cold drink and spot hippos and elephants that often cross the river. **079 912 9416**

Hoedspruit
Wildlife Estate

The urban pigs, content in town.



Tshokwane picnic site in southern Kruger is close enough for a day trip from Hoedspruit, and serves the best roosterkoek.

Elephants and hippos often wander past Three Bridges restaurant on the Olifants River.

Where to Eat

Head out of town on the R40 towards Tzaneen. The turn off to the **THIRSTY GIRAFFE** sneaks up on you, so check your odometer and when you've driven 4km, slow down till you see Tshukudu on your right, and you'll find the gate to the Thirsty Giraffe on the left. Father and daughter owners Vic and Lee make the best Portuguese fare you'll find anywhere in the Lowveld, and play the best tunes. Don't mind the donkeys that clop through the restaurant, they live here. **081 030 4568**

Where to Stay

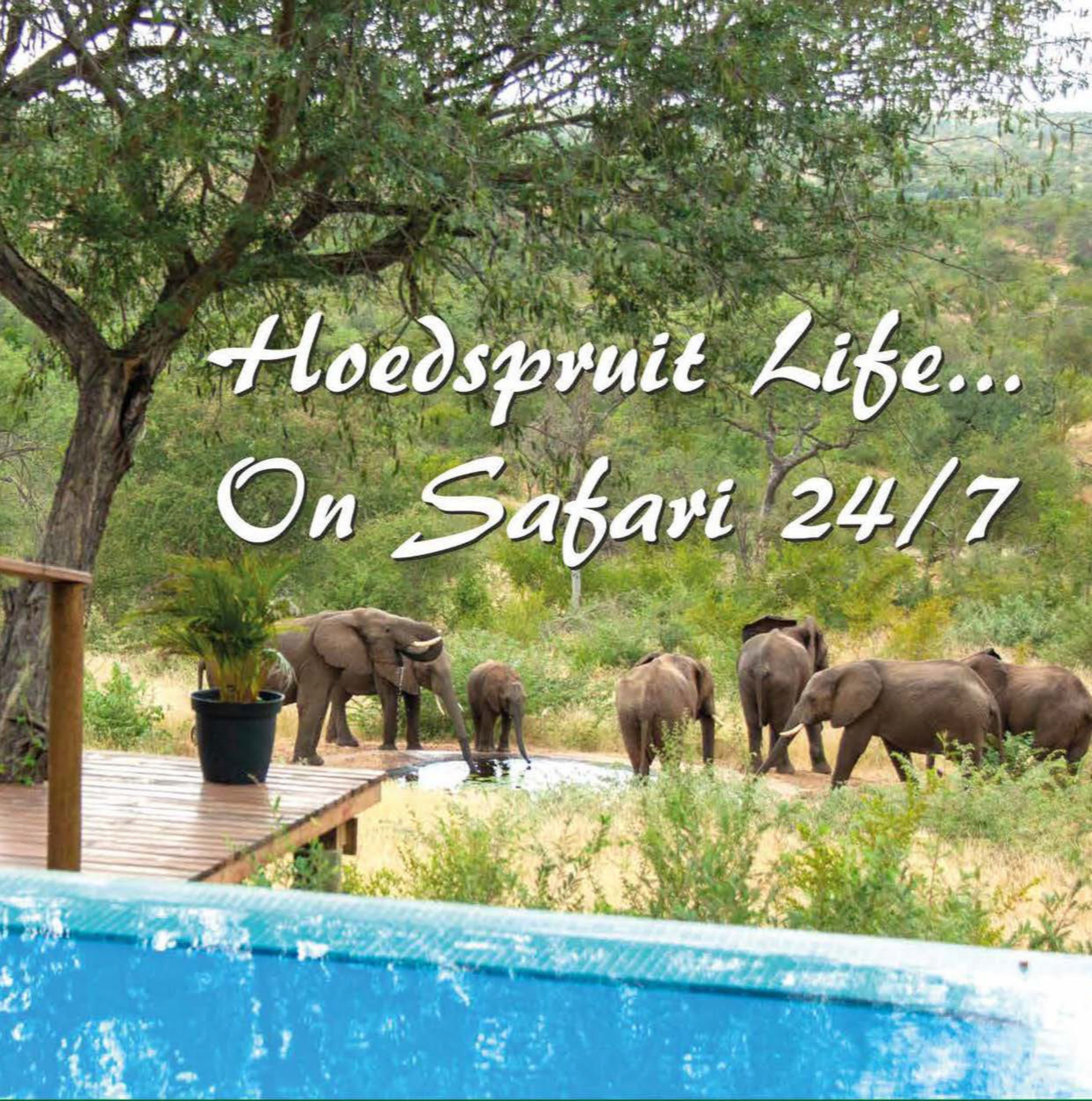
SWITSONGO BOUTIQUE B&B

This is a beautifully appointed B&B situated on Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate, where a giraffe or a little herd of nyala may stroll past your window. Switsongo has lovely bright rooms and a swimming pool, necessary in the Hoedspruit heat. There are also a number of cycling and walking trails on the estate that guests may enjoy. From R950 pp pn B&B

082 403 8172,
switsongo@gmail.com **G**

The Thirsty Giraffe

PHOTOGRAPHY GALLO IMAGES/GETTY, COURTESY IMAGES



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ART FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

ROGER BALLEN AND THE FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

AT THE INSIDE OUT CENTRE FOR THE ARTS, ARTIST ROGER BALLEN HAS CREATED A SPACE TO EXPLORE THE 'CONFLICTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVILISATION AND NATURE', ALL IN THE QUINTESSENTIAL BALLENESQUE STYLE

Think of Joburg. Wildlife isn't the first thing that springs to mind. But art and culture are up there. Roger Ballen's new Inside Out Centre for the Arts bridges the two. The space's inaugural exhibition, 'End of the Game', explores the decimation of wildlife in Africa, highlighting the ecological crisis on the continent through an artistic and historical lens.

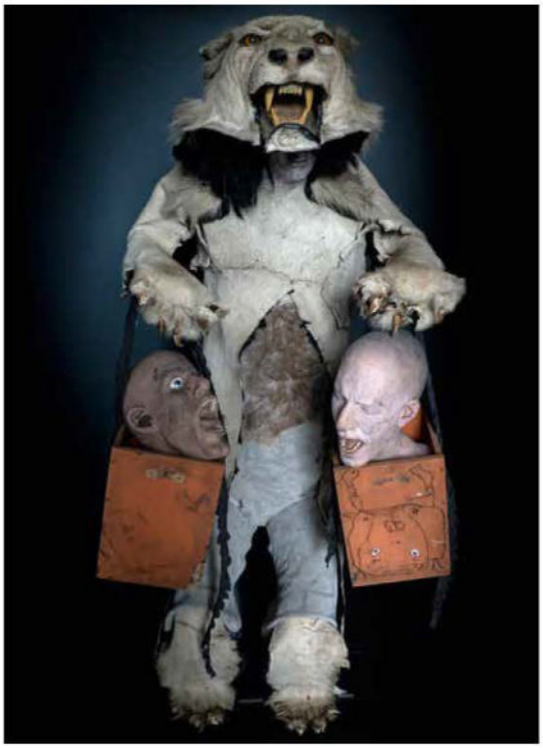
The plan is for the Inside Out Centre to present shows that explore issues related to Africa 'from a distinctively aesthetic and psychological perspective', in keeping with Ballen's singular artistic vision. It will also host a programme of educational talks, panel discussions, masterclasses and presentations on the current exhibition, and arts and culture in general. Workbooks for teachers and learners on conservation and animal rights are being developed.

Dedicated to advancing education through the arts, Ballen set up the Roger Ballen Foundation in 2007. It was renamed the Inside Out Trust Foundation, which has sponsored exhibitions in Joburg of various international artists and has brought guest lecturers to students in the city.

The Inside Out Centre for the Arts has been years in the making. Ballen felt the foundation needed a home for ongoing shows and programmes. In January 2018, he found the property.

As to the building itself, it was designed by Jo van Rooyen. Together with the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre and the Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation, it forms part of a trio of cultural centres in Forest Town, along the busy Jan Smuts Avenue.

It's a destination venue, close enough to Rosebank, with its restaurants and galleries, and just down the drag from Constitution Hill (worth a visit in its own right) and Braamfontein, possibly the most happening neighbourhood in the city of gold right now.



The name Inside Out reflects the idea that the centre's exhibitions will encourage introspection, and the design of the building itself is inspired by the same objective, it says. Raw concrete is used on the interior and exterior, and the concealed entrance opens into a double-volume, naturally lit space.

'I sometimes think that the building looks like it's been turned "inside out",' says Ballen. 'End of the Game' uses documentary photographs, artefacts and film clips along with Ballen's photographs and installations to record and highlight the historical significance and context of the 'Golden Age' of African hunting expeditions by colonialists and powerful Western figureheads, such as Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, King Edward VIII and Ernest Hemingway, which took place from the mid-1800s onwards. It chronicles the unrestrained hunting that's resulted in the ecological devastation of today, when poaching remains a significant threat to many African species, including elephants, rhinos and big cats.

International trophy hunters still come to countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, and the illegal trade of wildlife continues. 'This exhibition encourages vital discussions about our treatment of animals, wildlife management, responsible tourism and environmental stewardship in our current world,' says Ballen.

It includes various series from the mid-1980s onwards, and comprises photography, installation, painting and drawing, and light boxes made

from the Theatre of Apparitions (2016) images, shown at the Venice Biennale in 2022, also appear. For this series, Ballen and Marguerite Rossouw painted and drew ghost-like figures on the windows of a Johannesburg warehouse and photographed these creations.

A Few Facts

Statistics from the centre include that in recent years, an estimated 20 000 elephants have been killed every year for their ivory, according to the World Wildlife Fund. Save the Rhino says that in the last decade, 9 396 rhinos were poached.

Former US president Theodore Roosevelt and his son Kermit went on a two-year hunting expedition in Africa, from 1908 to 1910. By the end, Roosevelt and his companions had killed or trapped about 11 390 animals.

In the 1800s, hippo teeth, which didn't yellow, were used to make false teeth and earned 21 shillings a pound. Ivory was a symbol of wealth in many Victorian-era English homes, and it was used to make piano keys, billiard balls and carved ornaments.

One African port alone demanded the slaughter of 25 000 elephants to meet the desire for ivory products.

Hunting is still a source of income for many African countries, generating more than $200 million (around R3.7 billion) a year, but the industry often operates in illegal or unregulated markets. World Animal Protection, the global animal rights organisation, found a universally strong opposition to blood sport and a desire to finance the protection of South African wildlife through non-lethal alternatives such as responsible wildlife tourism.

Its research found that 84% of international and 88% of UK tourists agreed that the South African government should prioritise wildlife-friendly tourism over trophy hunting.

To view the exhibition, booking is essential; tickets are R150 for adults and R100 for students.
insideoutcentreforthearts.com
insideoutcentre
Inside Out Centre for the Arts

JOIN THE CLUB

Sign Up With Wilderness

MEMBERSHIP GETS YOU PREFERENTIAL RATES, A TRAVEL DESIGNER AND EVEN DISCOUNTS

Wilderness is all about conservation. It was started by a group of African guides in 1983 with a view to preserving some of the most pristine, untamed pieces of the continent. Today, these pieces add up to more than 2.3 million hectares.

This needs buy-in from the surrounding communities, and working with local people is a founding pillar of the company.

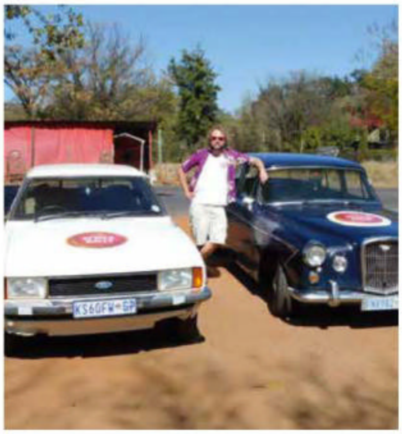
Another is showing visitors just how splendid and conservation-worthy these wildlands are. There are more than 60 lodges and camps across eight countries. There is also the Wilderness Members' Club. African residents can join, with the membership fee going directly to Children in the Wilderness, as a donation.

For joining, you and your guests get preferential rates, high season availability and last-minute discounts over the two years of your membership, with an option to renew.

Benefits include access to a dedicated travel designer, who'll curate a fabulous safari on the best available rates. There's no restriction on the number of bed nights in Wilderness-managed properties, and member flight and road transfer rates are available.

There are discounts for children 16 years and under, and member rates can be extended to spouses and up to four friends and family.

members@wildernessdestinations.com



DRIVE MY CAR

Three Weeks of Happiness

IT'S NOT A RACE; IT'S AN ADVENTURE THAT WILL PLASTER A SMILE RIGHT ACROSS YOUR FACE

From a party in Hartbeespoort, South Africa to a party in Kisumu, Kenya, by car; more than 4 000km, three possible routes, all taking you past Africa's great lakes, wildlife, breakdowns, mad adventures and general mayhem. Yes, this is The Pathfinder Edition of The Africa Rally.

It's three weeks of exploration, designed by the infectious Paul Clayton, a Brit who drove from London to Mongolia, relocated to South Africa, opts for a 1.6 Ford Cortina with 800 000km on the clock (and still going strong), and now wants to spread the love.

Paul's proved you don't need a 4×4 to drive across the continent. In fact, The Africa Rally encourages any other vehicle, from the ridiculous to the sublime, with fees dependent on the category you choose – think motorbike, 4×4, car, classic car and then random, which can be anything that drives, really: fire engines, milk floats, ambulances, ice-cream vans, tuk-tuks.

It's all for a good cause, besides the thrill of adventure. Each team must raise R10 000 for a charity.

And don't worry, the Advanced Research Division has been out in the field, testing routes for more than a year.

This edition of the rally starts on 1 July and finishes three weeks later, on 22 July. You can follow it on SA Commuter Radio.

africarally.com, sacommuter.com

TREE HUGGER

A Tree-planting Milestone

RWANDA'S GISHWATI FOREST IS GROWING, MEANING MORE ROOM FOR GORILLAS TO ROAM

The jury is out on how many trees it takes to make a forest, but it's a lot – somewhere between 100 and 200 per half a hectare. Wilderness is flexing its tree-planting muscles and has planted 100 000 trees in its drive to reforest Bisate and Gishwati in Rwanda.

In so doing, the ecotourism company has created new swathes of habitat beside the Volcanoes and Gishwati-Mukura national parks. The parks draw visitors to witness the awe-inspiring mountain gorillas. But they're not the only beneficiaries of the reforestation programme.

Several trail cameras that monitor the wildlife on the newly reforested land have shown golden monkeys, serval and other animals exploring the space.

'All the trees were nurtured from seed to sapling in our onsite nurseries, with the tree planting assisted by local co-operatives, community members, staff and guests,' said Rob Baas, the MD of Wilderness Safaris Rwanda. The reforestation has had a 'far-reaching and dramatic impact on the unique fauna and flora of a precious and increasingly rare habitat'.

Forest of Hope Association agronomist Beatrice Nyiransabimana says size and forest cover in Gishwati Forest has dropped 98% since the 1970s. Species planted include Ficus sp, *Symphonia globulifera, Maesopsis eminii, Xymalos monospora, Albizia adianthifolia* and Strombosia.

wildernessdestinations.com/africa/rwanda

WORDS LORRAINE KEARNEY **PHOTOGRAPHY** WILDERNESS, TEAGAN CUNNIFFE, THE AFRICA RALLY, COURTESY IMAGES

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The Cavern Resort & Spa, named after the infamous Cannibal Cavern, is nestled high in the foothills of the Northern Drakensberg in the Amphitheatre World Heritage Site area. A place of captivating beauty surrounded by majestic mountains, lush indigenous forests and clear 'berg streams. It is a Site of Conservation Significance, home to Bushman paintings, age-old rock carvings and an interesting cannibal history - all in a natural setting, where bird, animal, indigenous tree and flower species flourish.

> "Our work is to create beauty, to make the land more fertile, to make our living, to leave the world better than when we came into it." *Bill Carte, 1941 - Founding Grandfather*

The CAVERN
EST. 1941

- Daily Guided Morning Hikes
- Daily Horse Rides
- 80km of MTB Trails
- Kids Play Areas
- Swimming Pool
- Tennis & Bowls
- Forest Retreat Spa
- Adventure Centre (Nearby)

SITE OF CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE

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TALES FROM A NAMELESS COUNTRY

SIHLE KHUMALO HAS TRAVELLED AFRICA BY BOAT, BUS, BIKE, TRAIN, CAR, TAXI, PLANE. IF IT MOVES, HE JUMPED ON IT DURING HIS TRAVELS FROM CAPE TO CAIRO. IN HIS RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK, *MILK THE BELOVED COUNTRY*, ABOUT HIS TREK AROUND SOUTH AFRICA, SIHLE ASKS THE ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Interview by **Lauren Dold**

When I travelled through Africa, I used public transport. And that changes almost everything. There's so much more interaction. In a car, you're just in a bubble, you miss out on things. So you have to stop and talk to people. That's why I've never understood this concept of international tourists coming to Johannesburg, booking into a four- or five-star hotel, and then getting into their air-conditioned buses and going to Soweto.

They look out the window, they might even have a meal at one of the restaurants, but then they get back into their buses and head back to Sandton. And I just think, you've been to Soweto, but have you *been* to Soweto?

Later when I travelled our own country I couldn't use public transport, for obvious reasons. It's not only the road and rail infrastructure. When you take a taxi you have no control over the speed, or how the driver drives.

One thing I really would've liked to have done was give more people lifts. When you're with someone in a car for two, three hours, you get to know them. But it's just too unsafe, and taxi drivers don't

like it. It depends where you are, but they see it as a threat when drivers pick up hitchhikers, and if they see you it could end badly.

It's so important to talk to people when you travel. It's the best way to get a sense of a place, the history, the current affairs.

I travelled by motorcycle, trains, boats, taxis and buses. I was so surprised by how advanced the railway system in Egypt was; far, far better than ours. Just the average overnight train was amazing, even second or third class. It's so hot that all the trains are air-conditioned.

In Rwanda, it was the taxi system that pleasantly surprised me. Here, the taxi driver waits till the taxi is full, however long that may be. In Kigali, they work on time slots, and they run on schedule whether the taxi is full or not. And there's no money exchange between passenger and driver, you pay beforehand at an office. And if you take a motorbike taxi, they hand you a helmet! Mind-blowing for a South African.

When I travelled around South Africa, I got thinking about names. I deal with this in my book. Towns, places, street names; they're all out of context because as a country, we do not have a name. What we have is a geographical location; the southern part of Africa.

I find the power dynamic in naming fascinating. A governor would just come along and name a place, after his own home in Europe or after his own father. Did the citizens agree to that? Even now, we don't quite have it right.

It is interesting the way things are arbitrarily named. Grahamstown may be called Makhanda, now, but locals have always, and will always call it eRhini. It was a name already being used, why wasn't it chosen?

There is a township outside Secunda called eMbalenhle, which means 'beautiful flower'. Really? Who named that? Was it local black people, or was it White people who thought it was a nice translation? Outside Cape Town, Gugulethu means 'our pride'. Whose pride? That name was given to that area by the apartheid government. We should have had a name change in 1994. It's important; names form part of our identity, and when you live in a nameless country, it affects that identity. ■

Read Sihle Khumalo's newest book: ***Milk the Beloved Country***

PHOTOGRAPHY ALAMY, GALLO/GETTY IMAGES, COURTESY IMAGES

Sihle's TOP FIVE TIPS

FOR TAKING PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN AFRICA

1

Don't overpack. When you are taking different modes of transport every day, no one cares if you wear the same shirt two days in a row.

2

Carry US dollars, and change into local currency as you go along. And don't trust the informal currency traders at the borders!

3

Avoid eating meat. Rather have fish, especially in a place like Malawi where you can watch the fishermen catch it.

4

Drink bottled water, and carry it with you.

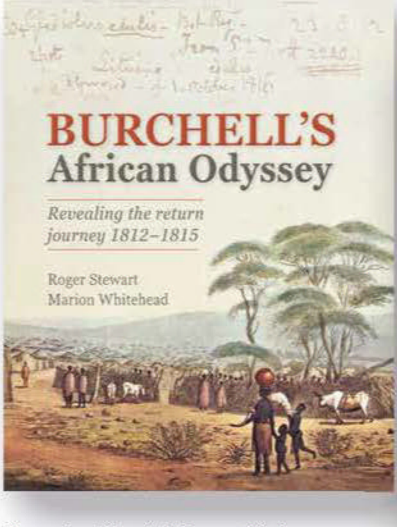
TRANSPORT
COMMUN

5

Talk to the person next to you. Locals know the best places to go, what to do, where to eat and where to sleep!

PUT YOUR NOSE IN A BOOK

ON THE DAYS YOU CAN'T HAVE AN ADVENTURE OF YOUR OWN, READING ABOUT OTHER INTREPID EXPLORERS IS JUST THE TICKET



Burchell's African Odyssey

BY ROGER STEWART AND MARION WHITEHEAD

–

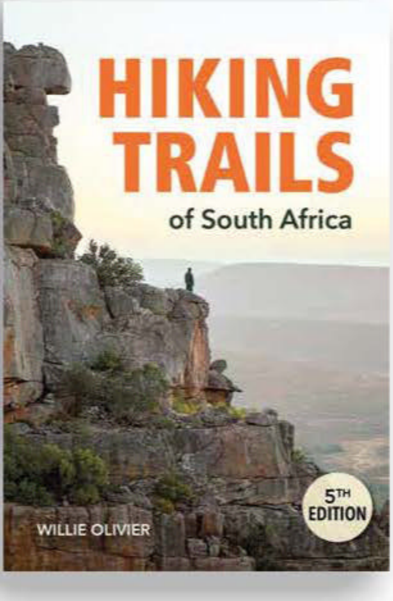
Penguin Random House/Struik Nature, RRP R340

Burchell's zebra, Burchell's coucal, Burchell's sandgrouse, Burchell's courser, *Eciton burchellii* army ant, Burchell's sugarbush – a great number of South Africa's flora and fauna have been named for British polymath William Burchell. He was the first European to describe the now-vulnerable African black-footed cat, Africa's smallest wild cat, after seeing skins in Litakun (now Dithakong).

Burchell arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in 1810, when he was 29, and six months later set off into the hinterland, returning after four years, carrying in his wagons 63 000 specimens of plants, bulbs, insects, reptiles and mammals – many not previously documented for science – and produced more than 500 paintings and illustrations.

Something of a legend in southern Africa, he meticulously documented his year-long outbound journey. His three-year return, from the southern Kalahari via the Karoo and southern coastal belt back to Cape Town, has been less well known. Until now. This book, subtitled *Revealing the Return Journey 1812–1815*, does just that. The authors have delved deep, and it's a fascinating read, although perhaps a little dry. It's more historic manuscript than poetic unpacking – yet that is exactly its purpose.

The reader comes away with an enhanced understanding of Burchell's thirst for knowledge and far greater insight into this country in the early 19th century.



Hiking Trails of South Africa

BY WILLIE OLIVIER

–

Penguin Random House/Struik Nature, RRP R340

Want to blaze your own trail? Mount Currie Nature Reserve outside Kokstad is your go-to place. Got a week to kill in eNtokozweni (Machadodorp)? The 100km-long High Five Trails will keep you busy.

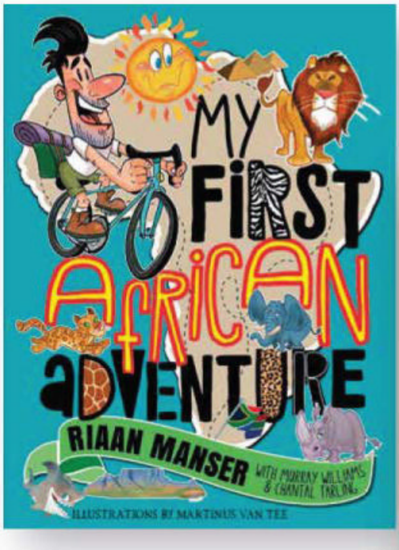
The author has walked a great deal around South Africa and has collated his vast knowledge in this, the fifth edition of his essential book. It explores more than 200 trails, from undemanding, hour-long strolls to multi-day mountainous hikes, catering to the beginner and the experienced.

For the experienced, it offers hikes you may not have done, with beautiful photographs to entice you. For newbies, there's plenty of advice and insight, including a section on trail ethics – and even a sample menu for a three-day hike, a taster of which includes a lunch of six slices of rye bread, three apples and more. Dinner even includes instant pudding. You shan't go hungry.

His kit list is a lifesaver and includes advice on buying your all-important footwear, pack and sleeping bag. There are also helpful hints such as: when not in use, turn one of the batteries around so it doesn't go flat if accidentally switched on during the day.

This is an indispensable book, providing almost endless inspiration.

WORDS LORRAINE KEARNEY **PHOTOGRAPHY** SUPPLIED


MY FIRST AFRICAN ADVENTURE
RIAAN MANSER WITH MURRAY WILLIAMS & CHANTAL TARLING
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARTINUS VAN TEE

My First African Adventure

BY RIAAN MANSER, WITH MURRAY WILLIAMS AND CHANTAL TARLING

–

Penguin Random House/Struik Nature, RRP R200

Everybody knows who Riaan Manser is – that lunatic adventurer who doesn't know the meaning of 'maybe not'. And thank goodness because it's through him that ordinary, more fearful folk can experience unimaginable trips.

This is his first book for children, with fabulous illustrations and practical information. Did you know, for instance, how to say 'Good morning, how are you?' in Ewondo?

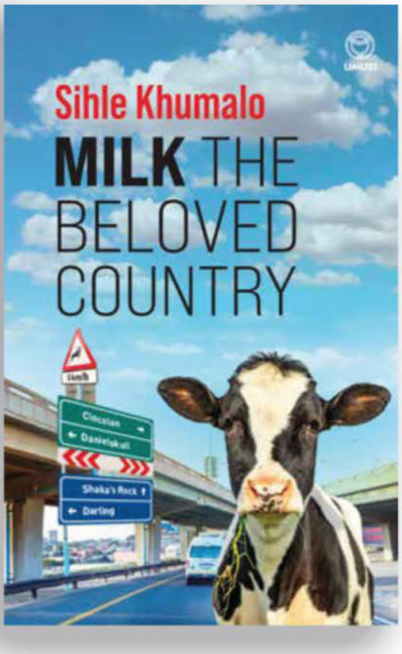
Manser began his madness in September 2003 with the singular aim of being the first person to circumnavigate Africa by bicycle. He returned two years later, 14kg lighter but with 36 500km and 34 countries under his belt.

Along the way, he flew off his bicycle and was seriously injured. Thanks to a man, a camel and a fortuitously passing doctor in an old 4x4, he was patched up.

Toilet breaks aboard a pirogue on the 38-hour sea crossing to Guinea-Bissau were an adventure on a whole new level.

On the road to Bir Sheba, Manser picked up a shivering cold mouse he called Russell and popped it in his pocket to warm up and dry off. Russell became a travelling companion.

This is a brilliant book that every parent should buy every child. Manser's second, *My First Island Adventure*, about his trip around Madagascar by kayak, will be published later this year.



Milk the Beloved Country

BY SIHLE KHUMALO

–

Penguin Random House/Umuzi, RRP R300

Proving that geography is no limitation to discovery, Sihle Khumalo, born in rural KwaZulu-Natal, travelled by public transport from Cape Town to Cairo. That journey was the subject of his first book. Since then, he's done a lot of travelling and discovering.

Now he dives into new territory – the history of South Africa. In a monumental research undertaking, Khumalo unpacks the history of the names given to our towns and cities (yes, even Zastron) and raises issues we might not have interrogated. He asks uncomfortable yet necessary questions.

But you also learn some astonishing things that most people probably do not know, which is sure to make you the most interesting person at the party.

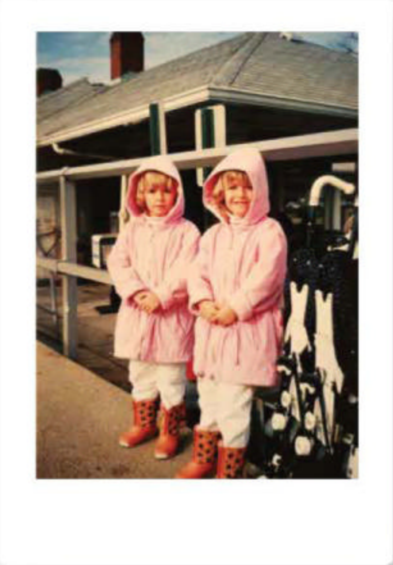
Colonisers and Cape governors gave their names to plenty of places, but not all. Howick was named for the English estate of Charles Grey, Lord Howick; Jacob Zuma's homestead is called KwaDakwadunuse, which he says means 'the place where you get drunk and then show your arse'. His own grandfather named one of his homesteads KwaPhumelefile, which means 'the place where you'll only rest when you're dead'.

MEET THE TEAM

MY FAVOURITE MEMORY OF …

THIS MONTH, THE *GETAWAY* TEAM REMINISCE ABOUT THEIR FIRST (OR FONDEST) OVERSEAS HOLIDAY

Getaway's Lauren Dold visited New York so many times as a child, she may as well have lived there.



AN AIRLINE BRAT IS BORN

LAUREN DOLD

The first time I boarded a 747-800, I was four years old. It was the first of many, many trips as an airline brat, and on that night we were boarding a flight to New York. I'm not sure the memories I have of this trip are actually my own; they're muddled with subsequent trips to New York (I'd visit another 22 times with my dad) and anecdotes from my parents, but I remember it was cold. It was December, and my twin sister and I spent most of the trip being wheeled around in a pram, hunched over from the cold. We wore matching fleece balaclavas that our mom sewed, and I remember peeking out at the snow and Christmas lights, and the wonder of seeing something special for the first time.

By the time we were 10, our passports were filled with stamps from New York, Atlanta, Miami, Hong Kong, Perth, London and Zurich. By 20, red pins for Beijing, Munich, Frankfurt, Bangkok, Hanoi, Mumbai, Phnom Penh, Penang, Buenos Aires, Washington DC, Victoria Falls, Kasane, Windhoek and Maputo dotted a map hanging in our lounge. I dare say the education I gained on these trips outweighed anything I ever learnt in a classroom. I travelled more as a child than I have as an adult and now, with no travel perks, no financial assistance, and certainly no business-class privileges, I realise just how privileged (and spoilt) I was.

Lorraine Kearney slayed a dragon in Oxford. Well, in her head she did.

A COURAGEOUS ACT

LORRAINE KEARNEY

An Australian, a Kiwi, a South African and a Moroccan walked into a bar. No really. Crouch End, North London, and the pub was called the Queen's Head. Because, of course, it was. We were all travellers sharing beers and an old Victorian terraced house and we gathered to plan our next assault on England. We'd done St Ives, the Lynton and Lynmouth Cliff Railway (waves going off, said the southern hemisphere contingent), the white cliffs of Dover, Stonehenge and Salisbury Cathedral. Why not Oxford, then down to Dragon Hill and White Horse Hill in Uffington? Why not, indeed. A rental was procured, hostels were booked, bags were packed, and in a few days we were off.

The City of Spires was everything we expected – beautiful, old, loads of pretentious students. And then, Uffington. We listened to Toto's *St George and The Dragon* but it wasn't a patch on *Africa*. It's thought St George was a high-ranking officer in the Roman army who was killed in around 303 CE in Palestine, and it's unlikely St George ever visited England. And even more unlikely that he slayed a dragon, dragons being mythological creatures. His name, however, was known in England by the eighth century. King Edward III made him the Patron Saint of England when he formed the Order of the Garter in St George's name in 1350. No matter all of this. We climbed the hill on a windy day, and with a cry of 'God for Harry, England and St George', I slayed the dragon with my imaginary sword.

Lisa Abdellah took a ferry to France from the UK... and spent a night in hospital.

TAKING A BREAK IN FRANCE

LISA ABDELLAH

The first time I left the UK was to visit my Uncle Mark and Aunty Jean in Holland when I was two. Uncle Mark worked there temporarily, and they lived in a leafy residential area close to Amsterdam. While I was too young to remember it, Mum admits that she accidentally walked me through Amsterdam's Red Light District.

My parents have always owned a caravan. My second trip abroad, which I do remember, was when I was eight, taking the P&O Ferry to France, where we stayed at a campsite in Quimper. My brother Carl had just recovered from a mysterious blister on his knee (that doctors back home in Liverpool had initially isolated him for as they thought it a rare disease), which had then turned out to be herpes.

The first few days of our holiday were accident-free. We gorged on pommes frites – way better than chippie chips – and crêpe au chocolat and messed about in a canoe on the camp's lake.

I persuaded Mum to let me go horse riding and the instructor to let me ride a horse that was way too big for me and let go of the reigns in an open field. Something spooked the horse, which bucked me off and bolted, and I broke the hand I put out to break my fall.

I spent a night in a hospital 50km from our campsite, arm in a cast, staring miserably at a plate of fancy duck à l'orange utterly wasted on a child who preferred pommes frites, and contemplating watching Carl canoeing from the sidelines.

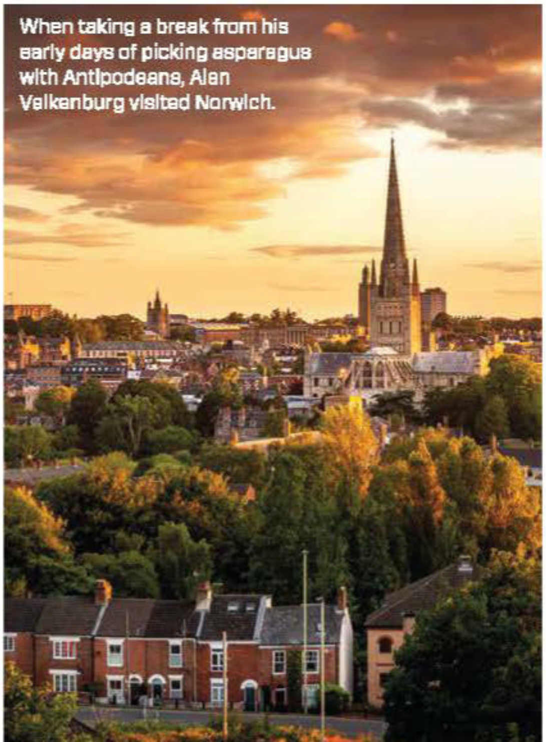
TRAVELLING TO DECIDE MY FUTURE

ALAN VALKENBURG

I left SA as an incredibly naive 19-year-old and headed off to the UK on a "working holiday" to make my fortune (I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my life but I was pretty sure it would involve studying first, and for *that* I'd need money). I had never been away from mom's cooking for longer than a week. I had never been on a plane. I had never been outside SA. This was a wake-up call.

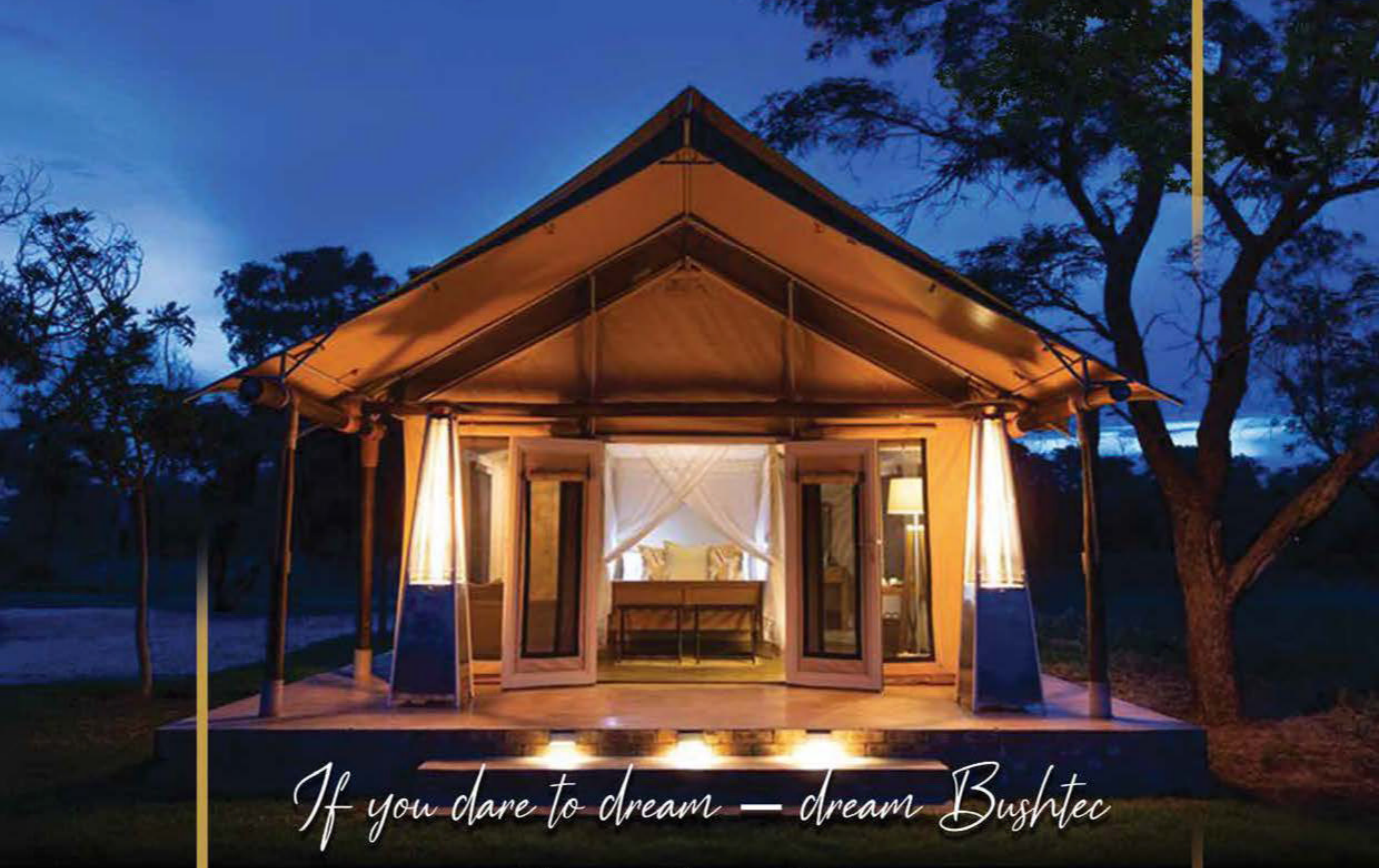
These days I'd laugh if someone suggested London is strange and exotic... in the scale of world travel, it really isn't that different. Back then, though, it was like I'd stepped into a different world... red telephone boxes, underground trains, cars that stopped at pedestrian crossings!

I spent a few days in London – as you do – before heading off to Norwich to work on a farm picking asparagus. These were the days before the Eurozone, and farms were full of mostly Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans. Over the next several months I moved from farm to farm, saving, travelling. I watched Wayne Ferreira at Wimbledon, watched Ian Wright at Highbury, witnessed the Proteas crush England at Lord's and was there when the Springboks beat France 52–10 at Parc des Princes. I learnt more, experienced more in that year than in the previous 10. And I realised what I wanted to do: I wanted to become a journalist!



When taking a break from his early days of picking asparagus with Antipodeans, Alan Valkenburg visited Norwich.

PHOTOGRAPHY GALLO/GETTY IMAGES, UNSPLASH, COURTESY IMAGES



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10 SECONDS OF COURAGE

WIPING AWAY TEARS AND FACING FEARS IN ZIMBABWE

Words **Lauren Dold**

'Don't look down. All you need is 10 seconds of courage… just be brave for 10 seconds.' I was tightly harnessed to a zip line, facing a 425m high-speed hurtle across Zimbabwe's Batoka Gorge, 120m above the churning Zambezi waters and wondering if it was possible to backtrack onto the platform, de-harness and lie down on the grass without anyone noticing.

On a week-long whirlwind press trip around the Kaza region, I was one of 12 journalists ticking off bucket-list adventures to promote tourism post-lockdown. So far, we'd walked with elephants, taken a chopper ride over Victoria Falls, been charged by a hippo in Chobe, and embarked on booze cruises down rivers in the region. When you're doing once-in-a-lifetime things every minute of every day, you make friends fast. In a vice grip on my left arm was Jes Brodie, *Sunday Times* journalist and the voice of reason telling me not to look down. Ten seconds of courage was all I needed, she assured me. After that, I assumed, I could go back to being a chicken. Because by then it'd be too late; we'd be whipping across the gorge at 106km/h with no brakes. This was Jes' second dose of adrenaline of the day; 20 minutes before, she'd stepped off the ledge of the bridge swing and plunged down into the gorge like it was the most natural thing in the world. The zip line was for wussies.

> *I could feel our weight and* ***THAT OF THE CABLE*** *straining against gravity. Below us, legs, up, bloated* ***AND COVERED IN BIRD DROPPINGS, A DEAD HIPPO*** *spun miserably in an eddy.*

I dug my nails into my palms, chewing the inside of my cheeks till I tasted blood. I stepped wobbly-legged into the harness. The only comfort was my new best friend, harnessed in next to me without a hint of fear about her. We dropped onto the final ledge and sat into the harness, and before I could draw a proper breath to scream, we were careening through the air, gathering speed as we went. Sooner than I expected, we'd almost reached the other side, which is when the scary part begins; the backward fall in the opposite direction. Back we went, pulled towards the centre of the cable before changing direction again; back and forth, back and forth till eventually, we hung there, legs swinging in the breeze.

This was the scary part. With no speed to distract me, the reality of my position made my breath catch in my throat. I could feel our weight and that of the cable straining against gravity. Below us, legs up, bloated and covered in bird droppings, a dead hippo spun miserably in an eddy.

Don't look down, don't look down, don't look down. I looked at my hands instead, white-knuckled, clutching the harness. My other big fear is claustrophobia, and while I can be convinced to jump off a platform, I will never squeeze myself into an underground cave or go deep-sea diving. So I thought of diving in a dark cave with no light and no oxygen, and suddenly hanging out in the open air didn't feel so bad.

A few months later, on another press trip, Jes and I found ourselves at Walkersons Hotel & Spa in sleepy Dullstroom. Fast-paced thrills are few and far between; rolling hills, village strolls, lazy picnics… there's nothing to fear in Dullstroom, except maybe a stray hook on the end of a fly rod. After a long day of strolling, picnicking, and poolside lounging, Jes headed to her chalet in the garden while I stayed with the rest of the group finishing a bottle of wine in the dining room. She returned a few minutes later ashen and clammy, her voice panicky. 'Please walk me to my room,' she screwed her eyes shut. 'There's a frog on the path right near my door.'

As my acrophobia turns my legs to jelly, so does her ranidaphobia (the intense fear of frogs or toads). Frogs are so low on the list of things that scare me they don't even feature, so I walked Jes back to her chalet, my heart steady and hers beating out of her chest. She pulled back, and I spotted the offending amphibian in the grass near her door and told her not to look down. 'A few more metres to go,' I said. 'Just be brave; 10 seconds of courage is all you need.'■

ILLUSTRATION JESS NICHOLSON

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IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR WHEN YOU HAVE THE CHANCE TO SHOW YOUR PA JUST HOW GRATEFUL YOU ARE FOR HIS DAD JOKES. WE ROUNDED UP THE LATEST OUTDOOR GEAR TO MAKE IT A LITTLE EASIER

Words **MATTHEW STERNE**

NEW TOYS FOR THE OLD MAN

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FOR THE DAD WHO BLAZES THOSE TRAILS

Balega Blister Resist

R195, *shopbalega.co.za*

It's not Father's Day without a pair of socks, but be fancy this year and opt for a pair of Balegas. The average Balega sock already comes with a lot of padding, but these Blister Resist ones pack even more mohair cushioning into the vital toe and heel areas – incredibly useful on longer runs. Every pair of Balega socks is hand inspected, fits around the shape of your foot and is seamless.

Balega's Blister Resist Quarter Socks perfectly blend nature and technology to create the best anti-blister quarter running socks.

FOR THE DAD WHO SURFS

Surf's Up! Magnets

R199, *niftygifts.co.za*

As your dad reaches for leftovers in the fridge, let him get a taste of his other big love as he casts his eye over five surfboard magnets. They range in size from 4.5cm to 7cm and come in five designs: Long Board, Fun Board, Fish, Short Board and Gun.

LONE STAR
Big Texas
BEER SOAP
WOODSY SANDALWOOD SCENT
DUKE CANNON

FOR THE DAD WHO LOVES BEER

Duke Cannon Big Texas Beer Soap

R255, *justlikepapa.com*

In the same league of creative hybrid genius as cronuts and turduckens comes beer soap, the win-win Father's Day gift. The Big Texas Beer Soap from Duke Cannon is made in partnership with Lone Star Beer, the 'National Beer of Texas'. Don't fear, though, it won't leave your dad smelling like he had one too many at the saloon. Instead, it has a nice sandalwood scent that I'd be more than happy to lather on my own body (and maybe sneak a slurp of now and then).

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

FOR THE DAD WHO TRAVELS

Freedom of Movement Travel Wallet

R495, *freedomofmovement.co.za*

A very convenient and useful companion for the frequent flyer, this travel wallet provides a home for a passport, foreign currency, credit cards and plane tickets. Crafted from premium leather, it has a slip-in pocket for a passport and two credit card slots, making travel just a little bit easier (and losing a passport just a little bit harder) for your old man.

FOR THE DAD WHO HAS A BIT OF STYLE (OR NEEDS IT)

Freedom of Movement Men's Belt

R495, *freedomofmovement.co.za*

These Freedom of Movement belts have been purposefully (and cleverly) designed in colours to perfectly match their range of veldskoen. The belts – and shoes, obviously – come in these colours: field-green suede, black suede, stone suede, tan and chocolate brown. These slick accessories are 25mm wide and feature an antique brass buckle.

STANLEY
UNIVERSAL
Stanley
STANLEY

FOR THE DAD WHO LIKES VINTAGE GEAR
Stanley Milestones Black Patina Bottle

R2 395, *capeunionmart.co.za*

William Stanley Jr invented the all-steel vacuum bottle 110 years ago. To celebrate this anniversary, Stanley dug into its archives to draw inspiration from its most iconic bottles from the 1920s, '40s and '60s. This Black Patina bottle is based on the 1920s version and comes with front panel art, a cork inlay stopper and a William Stanley Jr signature etching at the base. Today's version has embraced the latest technology and comes with 4D Thermology insulation.

FOR THE DAD WHO DOES OVERNIGHT HIKES
Black Diamond Moji + 200 Lumen Lantern

R599, *driftersshop.co.za*

This surprisingly light lantern (107g) is smaller than a tennis ball, making it the ideal lantern to throw in an overnight hiking bag. The double-hook hang loop makes it easy to suspend in a tent so finding your toothbrush or settling into your sleeping bag will be a little bit easier. The lantern offers 200 lumens of solid or strobing white light, a full rainbow spectrum of colour, a relaxing campfire lighting mode and four magnets for easy attachment. It can run on alkaline or rechargeable batteries (bought separately).

Chilli & Thyme
Olive Tapenade
Mount Ceder
KALAMATA OLIVES
WHOLE
OLIVE OIL
Funky Ouma
BRAAI SALT
Funky Ouma
AFRICAN RUB
Funky Ouma

FOR THE DAD WHO LOVES TO BRAAI
Funky Braai Platter

R1 230, *giftlady.co.za*

Gift Lady has been delivering flowers and gifts around SA for 20 years, so they know about presenting gifts beautifully. This braai-centric hamper is filled with accessories that'll elevate any braai. A handmade blackwood cutting board (29cm x 19cm), an assortment of Funky Ouma rubs, Karoo and Coast black olives (250g), and a Chilli & Thyme olive tapenade (125ml) – all wrapped in a wooden hamper box.

Wogsman
re-create

FOR THE DAD WHO WANTS TO BRAAI SAFELY
Braai Glove

From R346, *incanda.co.za*

Scalding potjie lids and itinerant burning logs can be handled with confidence with a braai glove like this on your father's hand. It's convenient and slips onto the hand with ease. You can choose to buy either the right or left glove (or both for a 10% discount). The gloves can be engraved and come in black, butterscotch, ginger, oryx regal cora and pepper.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY IMAGES

A simple twist action releases a fresh scent.

Sneaker Balls®
DEODORIZE SHOES, GYM BAGS & LOCKERS
Twist to Activate
FRESH & CLEAN SCENT

FOR THE DAD WHO NEEDS A LITTLE FRESHNESS

Sneaker Balls

R99, *shopbalega.co.za*

Maybe this present is as much for yourself as your father, but these little balls will keep his shoes smelling good, which in turn do the same for the socks. These deodoriser balls feature a twisting mechanism that opens the vents to release a specially formulated fresh and clean scent. The scent lasts up to 90 days depending on use. They come in different patterns such as happy face, tie-dye, camo, soccer, basketball and football.

FEELING À LA EUROPE

HEAD OUT TO THESE SPOTS THIS WINTER; YOUR FRIENDS WILL THINK YOU'VE JETTED OFF TO EUROPE. JOKE'S ON THEM, THOUGH, BECAUSE YOU DON'T NEED TO HOP ON AN INTERCONTINENTAL FLIGHT TO HAVE A EUROPEAN GOURMET EXPERIENCE. MZANSI HAS IT ALL

Words **Mart-Marié du Toit**

ABOVE Afternoon tea at Le Lude Estate and Orangerie Restaurant will fulfil your wildest French fantasies.

LEFT The Orangerie Restraurant's divine trio is salted dark chocolate truffle tart, caramel and dulce de leche ice cream.

BELOW The Orangerie Restaurant is quintessentially French, its ambience *très chic.*

THE ORANGERIE, LE LUDE, FRANSCHHOEK

Le Lude will always be a favourite wine farm among Cap Classique lovers, and it's in their chic restaurant where you'll feel exquisitely French. The Orangerie specialises in fine French cuisine, and chef Nicolene Barrow uses traditional recipes with a modern twist to elevate locally sourced sustainable ingredients.

The à la minute baked Gruyère soufflé with crisp celery and apple salad is deliciously indulgent and delightfully fresh. The soufflé, one of the lightest I've had in South Africa, has a sharper flavour than I anticipated – a welcome surprise. And coupled with crunchy apple and celery – with just the right amount of sweet and bitter – it's a revelation in soft, hard, creamy, sweet and savoury. A must-have.

And no one should leave without ordering the quintessential cheese platter, which the French love at the end of a meal. At The Orangerie, they grow and preserve their own quinces and serve these beauties on a Dalewood cheese platter fit for a king.

Dishes such as these have helped Nicolene and her team make The Orangerie one of Franschhoek's go-to restaurants, and one bite of her soufflé will make anyone a convert.

The views from the Orangerie are pure Franschhoek magic, and it is easy to feel as if you're sipping your glass of Cap Classique in the South of France, basking in the dappled winter sunlight streaming through the windows.

QUICK-FIRE Q&A WITH CHEF NICOLENE BARROW

What culinary tricks do you have up your sleeve for your winter menu?

I'll serve wild boar tortellini in a mushroom broth for the first time on our menu. We'll also serve our old faithful: the popular French onion soup and sole meunière.

Which wines should be on our must-try list?

Le Lude Cuvée Reserve 2013, sold at Le Lude, Kleinood Tamboerskloof Mouvèdre 2021 and Donkiesbaai Hooiwijn 2021 are some of my favourites.

If you had to change your entire menu to represent a different cooking style, what would you change it to?

I'd love to cook proper Greek cuisine. It has such a fantastic history, and the diversity of recipes from all the different islands is genuinely inspirational.

THE FLYING SCOTSMAN, WALKERSONS HOTEL & SPA & COTTAGES, DULLSTROOM, MPUMALANGA

The countryside views at Walkersons will transport you to the Scottish Highlands even before stepping into the Scottish country manor built with natural stone and wood, where exciting nooks and crannies abound. Here, you can while away mornings fly-fishing or simply stare at the green, rolling hills of the estate. Or spend afternoons dozing on your terrace or chatting to locals in Peggy's Bar, whisky in hand. Evenings are a spoil – especially when you dine at The Flying Scotsman, where chef Guy Nahman and his team curate daily and seasonally specific menus consisting of four courses and sorbets to tempt your palate. It's a culinary journey, and you'll be forgiven if you start speaking with a Scottish lilt while sitting by the log fire on a cold Mpumalanga night.

Their signature menu items – the rainbow trout and confit duck, served in a continually reimagined array of dishes accompanied by seasonal delicacies – are indeed works of culinary genius. Guy says these dishes fly off the pass whenever they're part of the daily menu, and it's no wonder. Here, the confit duck, which tends to be greasy when prepared by inexperienced hands, becomes a lesson in nutty, slightly sweet meat. Heaven. I've also had the pleasure of dining on their exquisite oxtail and had a few of their famous scones as a tea option in the afternoon. They're famous for a reason – so don't miss out. Guy has travelled widely and experienced many different cultures while tasting delicious food, which shines through in his menus.

ABOVE Breakfast on the patio with countryside views – and much better weather than in Scotland!

BELOW The Terrace menu at Walkersons has laid-back meal options and foodies consider it one of the most picturesque restaurants in the country.

QUICK-FIRE Q&A WITH CHEF GUY NAHMAN

What influences your cooking, and what cooking styles are most present in your kitchen?
My food experiences and memories influence my cooking style. From feasts prepared with friends and family to lunch breaks with my fellow chefs and cooks, where beautiful produce always took centre stage, to my travels, where exciting street food is always my go-to. In the Walkersons' kitchen, we primarily practise modern European-style cooking with local influences and some exotic ideas.

Three wines we should be drinking now?
The three wines on my winter bucket list are Marras Piekenierskloof Grenache, Creation Pinot Noir and Klein Constantia Sauvignon Blanc.

The Dullstroom ingredient your kitchen can rely on year after year?
One of Dullstroom's best seasonal ingredients is blueberries, which we use to make jam and preserves, and use in desserts. We also use them in some of our main courses when the opportunity arises.

If you had carte blanche, what would you do with your menu?
I'd change it to a fully produce-driven menu, highlighting the best of what's available in the region and incorporating more natural cooking methods such as smoking and wood-fired cooking.

What can guests look forward to at The Flying Scotsman?
Staying true to our gourmet-country dining, we'll offer more heart-warming menu options. Think braised beef short ribs, slow-roasted lamb and Indian-style vegetable curries, all done with flair and originality.
walkersons.co.za

The ***CONFIT DUCK,*** *which tends to be greasy when* ***PREPARED BY*** *inexperienced hands, becomes a lesson in* ***NUTTY, SLIGHTLY SWEET*** *meat.* ***HEAVEN***

Few things in life beat an authentic Italian Vee and Forti platter of imported cold meats and cheeses with an ice-cold glass of Prosecco.

RIGHT The couple usually dines with their patrons, doling out sips of taster wines and sharing jokes.

MORE SPAGHETTI
LESS UPSETTI

QUICK-FIRE Q&A WITH RESTAURATEUR FORTUNATO MAZZONE

What influences your cooking?
I'm a proud chef of Irpinian heritage. My family has been involved in the restaurant and hostelry business for generations. I love the culture of hospitality and good-quality food that is pervasive in my heritage and has influenced the simplicity and purity of my food, my approach towards my clients and the quality of our ingredients.

What cuisines do you favour after Italian cuisine?
I guess it would be Spanish or Portuguese because I love both countries, and Greek and Southern French food. The areas are all related. I could also easily live on Lebanese food. I love all the food present on the rim of the Mediterranean Sea.

Your career has spanned decades, but can you single out a recent career highlight?
There are so many, but I'd say winning an Eat Out star and the award for the best service at a restaurant in SA at the 2022 Eat Out Awards are right up there.
veeandforti.com

You have more than 1 100 wines at Vee and Forti. Can you choose just a couple to recommend?
I love Taaibosch red from Schalk-Willem Joubert, a classic Bordeaux-style red done so well. My links to Saronsberg through my Nick & Forti's range of wine are well known, so I'd have to say our Epicentre (known as the Saronsberg Seismic throughout South Africa), and if we want for a Burgundian-style wine, I would have to say the Seven Flags Pinot Noir from Paul Clüver. It's an unfair question because I genuinely love hundreds of our wines, which are unique and special. I also love wines made by Eben Sadie, Ian Naudé, The Foundry wines and many others.

WIN

Scan the QR code with your phone to stand a chance to win.

THE PRIZE

One lucky reader could win a luxurious wine tasting and charcuterie board for four people at Vee and Forti in Pretoria. This prize is non-transferable and is valued at R2 500. Scan the QR code to enter.

VEE & FORTI
WINE BAR & LIQUOR EMPORIUM

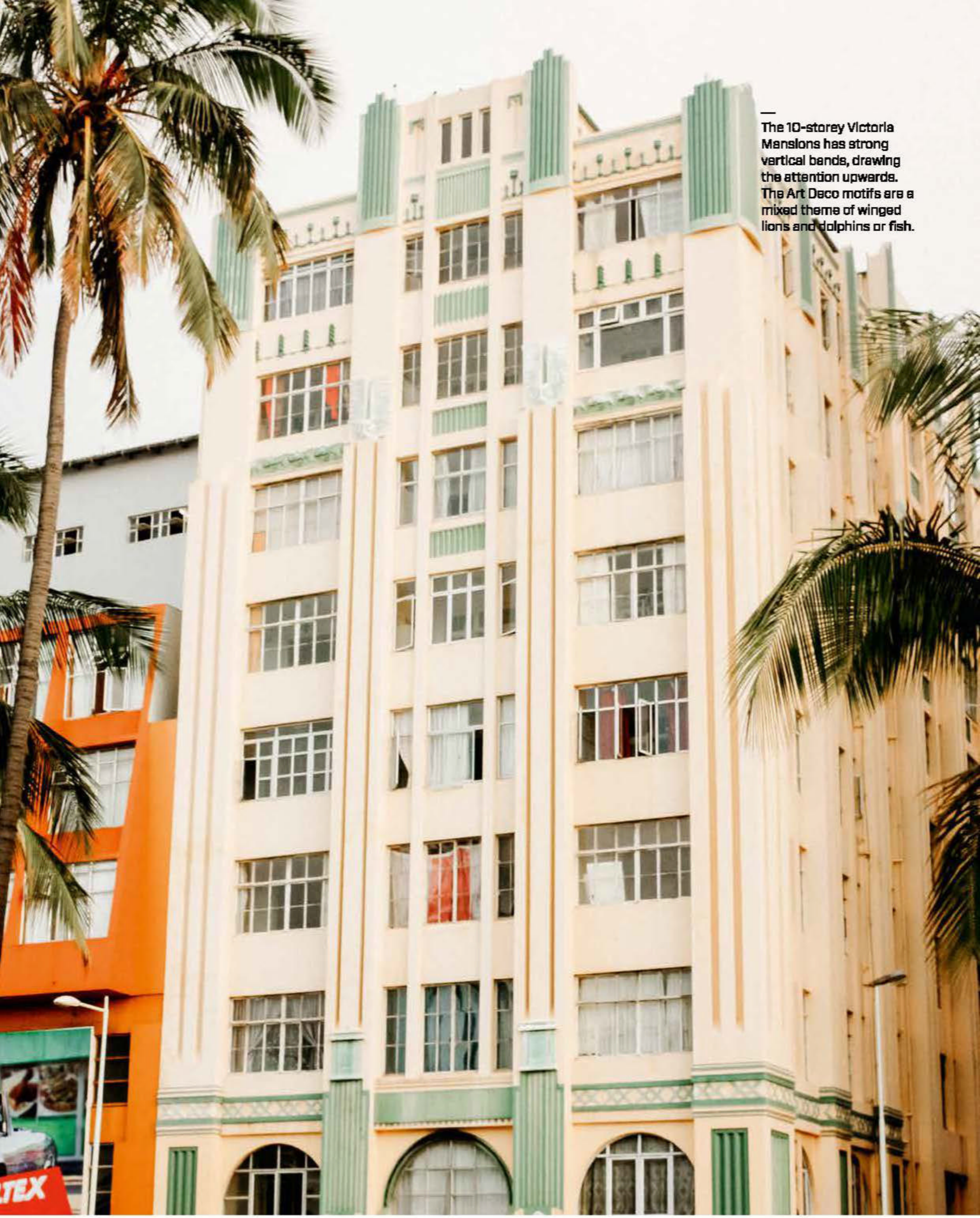
VEE AND FORTI WINE BAR AND LIQUOR EMPORIUM, LYNNWOOD BRIDGE, PRETORIA, GAUTENG

Fortunato Mazzone, or Forti as he's known to most, needs no introduction to the culinary world. When we were little, a trip to Ritrovo, the stalwart Italian restaurant he ran with his late father, would be a highlight. If Forti decided to sing opera while we were eating, his rich voice would make it the perfect night.

Now, Forti is the emperor of a couple of Pretoria restaurants, all worth a visit. His Pretoria empire consists of Forti Grill & Bar at the top of the Time's Square Casino, Forti Bistro at Brooklyn Bridge, and Forti Too as well as Vee and Forti at Lynnwood Bridge. They all have a strict Italianness about them, but something about the tiny hamlet of Vee and Forti draws me back every time. It could be the excellent wines from across the world, readily available to taste and buy, the truffles he periodically gets his hands on, or the cute red Vespa outside… Whatever Forti touches turns into Italian gold.

His latest venture, opened with his wife, Veralda (Vee) Mazzone, serves Italian charcuterie platters, among other Italian delicacies. The look is classic Italian bottle store meets fine-dining deli, and it works. Here, you can buy fresh and dry pasta and all the necessities for a gourmet dinner – from humble peeled tomatoes to foie gras and caviar. It's hard to single out a specific ingredient here – but trust me when I say they're all delectable. So, if you pop in, be prepared to order a platter filled with imported French and Italian cheeses, imported cold meats you'll dream about after the last bite, homemade preserves, dips, caponata, Greek olives and some of the best sourdough bread in Pretoria.

When visiting, you'll feel as if you walked into a small-town liquor store in the Italian countryside. One tucked in between the houses dotted among the hillsides. Boxes of wine, overflowing produce, fresh sourdough breads and the unmistakable smell of something delicious brewing in the back. ●



The 10-storey Victoria Mansions has strong vertical bands, drawing the attention upwards. The Art Deco motifs are a mixed theme of winged lions and dolphins or fish.

A SENSE OF PLACE

SUB-TROPICAL AND GLAMOROUS, A CITY OF BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE, OCEAN LINERS, RACEHORSES, FAST CARS AND PALM TREES – DURBAN'S ART DECO BUILDINGS HARK BACK TO A GOLDEN AGE

Words **Lorraine Kearney**

On the corner of Margaret Mncadi Avenue (Victoria Embankment) and Parry Road, looking out over the ocean, the pilasters on a striking yellow building draw the eye ever upwards, past a tiled panel over the doorway and straight up to the sky above.

Victoria Mansions was completed in 1935, an elegant residential building along the popular promenade. It's an arresting example of the Art Deco style, imported from the capitals of Europe in the post-war euphoria. Known initially as Art Moderne, Style Moderne, or simply, the Modern Style, it set up Durban as an alluring, elegant city of the 1930s.

There are more than a handful of Art Deco buildings in the hot, brooding city; many beautifully maintained, others woefully neglected, and still others torn down in the mad scramble for modernity that tore through South Africa in the latter half of the 20th century.

The motifs on the 10-storey Victoria Mansions are a mixed theme of winged lions and dolphins or fish, explains the Durban Art Deco Society. The first floor has bow-shaped windows and the glazed tile panel above the entrance depicts a Union Castle mail ship sailing into the harbour with the Bluff headland in the background. The panel is flanked on either side by a striking relief of a vulture complete with its own characteristic geometric lines. These are all common aspects of the Art Deco style of architecture.

'Durban has more than 100 identified Art Deco buildings, and quite a few more with some features of Art Deco,' says the Society's Michael Mulholland. There are three distinct categories: the earliest styles in the 1930s were quite 'classical' in their elaborate ornamentation; the 'streamline' style followed; then the International Style. They include architect-designed blocks of flats, an aerodrome, homes, office blocks and the Cenotaph.

Various architectural forms are found in Durban, once a colonial Victorian city. Opposite the Baroque revival City Hall, for example, are the Albany Hotel (Art Deco), the Playhouse Theatre (Tudor Revival) and the former Prince's Theatre (Berea Style).

Art Deco became a trend in the 1920s in the US and some parts of Europe. In South Africa, always a few years behind, it only caught on in the 1930s. 'Some architects theorise it appealed to a growing commercial class as a sort of reaction against the stuffy neo-classical styles that came with the British Empire. The new "modern" style reflected growing excitement about speed (cars, ships, trains), mechanisation and automation. It spread to appliances, dress and jewellery,' says Michael.

Reinforced concrete also became widespread about then, a key ingredient in Art Deco buildings, with their unsupported strip and corner windows, string courses and 'eyeshade' strips above windows.

Another theory was that Art Deco was prominent in places such as Mumbai and came to some extent with the commercial immigrants from India, who used the ideas in their buildings and businesses.

Happily, during Covid-19 it seems building owners filled their time painting and repairing. The colours have also brightened up recently, emphasising the buildings' decorative elements.

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Although a subject of argument and debate, generally Art Deco buildings are symmetric about their entrance, although The Edward hotel isn't. Entrances are highlighted with pilasters or fins that draw the eye up to the skyline, which is decorated with crenelations, finials, flagpoles or other devices. Horizontal lines may be emphasised with string courses, window eyeshades or a pattern of windows and balconies.

Vertical lines may be emphasised with pilasters or fins, often terminating past the last horizontal lines of the buildings, pushing up into the sky. The surfaces, such as spandrels below windows, or the pilaster faces, may be decorated with geometric symbols, crests or stucco sculptures of animals.

LEFT The Edward hotel, built in 1939 and owned by Amalgamated African Hotels, has hosted princes and presidents, field marshals, millionaires and movie stars.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT Willern Court foyer – built in 1937, the building is a significant example of Style Moderne; Grandborough Court, completed in 1935, has a resplendent snowcrete exterior finish; the Cenotaph with the soul of the fallen warrior being borne heavenward by two angels was at first not appreciated by the Durban public; Colonial Mutual Life was the tallest building in the Union of South Africa until 1939.

Egyptian and Mayan themes are common, as are motifs of animals – eagles and vultures were particularly popular, following the opening of Tutankhamen's burial chamber in 1923.

A feature is the quality in the architecture of the interwar period. Stamford Hill Aerodrome is an example. Built in 1936 as Durban's first modern aerodrome, the building has survived and has been adapted to house the Queen Nandi Mounted Rifles (formerly the Natal Mounted Rifles) regiment.

There's no distinct style of Durban Deco, but many of its buildings have a touch of Durban in them, such as marine aspects and wildlife. Berea Mansions, for example, has stained glass porthole windows depicting the Bluff and an old biplane. There is also an Eastern influence to be seen in the old Indian trading district.

FOUR AREAS

Durban's Deco can be seen in four areas: city centre, beachfront, Dr Yusuf Dadoo (Grey and Broad) Street, and the Berea. And the most significant buildings are probably Victoria Mansions, Enterprise Building, Surrey Mansions and Cheviot Court.

Of course, as with any city, the best way to get under its skin is to walk it. The Durban Art Deco Society has a DIY walking tour on its website, as well as a driving tour of the broader area. The buildings are almost all private, however, and have controlled access.

CITY CENTRE

Opened in 1933, at 13-storeys, Colonial Mutual Life was the tallest building in the Union of South Africa until 1939. It was seen as a symbol of strength and faith in the future of Durban.

330 Dr Pixley Kaseme (West) Street

Willern Court, built in 1937, is a Style Moderne building. It has horizontal and vertical bands as well as the curved windows characteristic of this style. True to the coastal city, there are nautical references in the coloured glass windows near the entrance.

157–159 Margaret Mncadi Avenue (Victoria Embankment)

The influence of Miami Art Deco is evident, says the society, with the tropically themed coloured glass panels forming 'a contextual decorative companion to the adjacent tall palm trees on the Embankment'.

The Cenotaph, the Durban war memorial, was unveiled in 1926. On the Dorothy Nyembe (Gardiner) Street side, the entrance to the Sacred Acre has stylised Art Deco bronze lions standing on either side of the bronze gates. At first, the blue and gold Art Deco sculpture was not appreciated by the public, who apparently found the bright colours 'disturbing' on such an emotional memorial.

Farewell Square, corner Dr Pixley Kaseme (West) and Dorothy Nyembe (Gardiner) streets

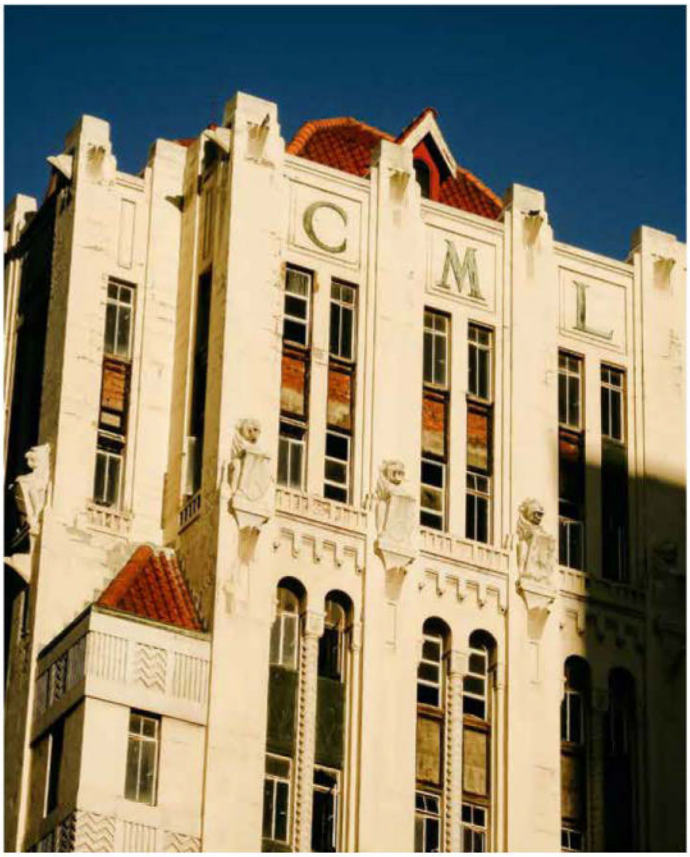
BEACHFRONT

The beachfront has Althea Court, Grandborough Court, Olympic Court, The Edward, the Suncoast Casino and Towers Hotel and the Stamford Hill Aerodrome, among others.

Grandborough Court, with its snowcrete exterior finish, was completed in 1935. Its design celebrates the straight lines of the modern machine age just as Art Deco connects beauty and industry. All 61 flats in this block have unique dimensions, yet this does not affect the overall harmony.

15 OR Tambo (Marine) Parade

PHOTOGRAPHY DURBAN ART-DECO SOCIETY, KZNPR.CO.ZA – HUGH BLAND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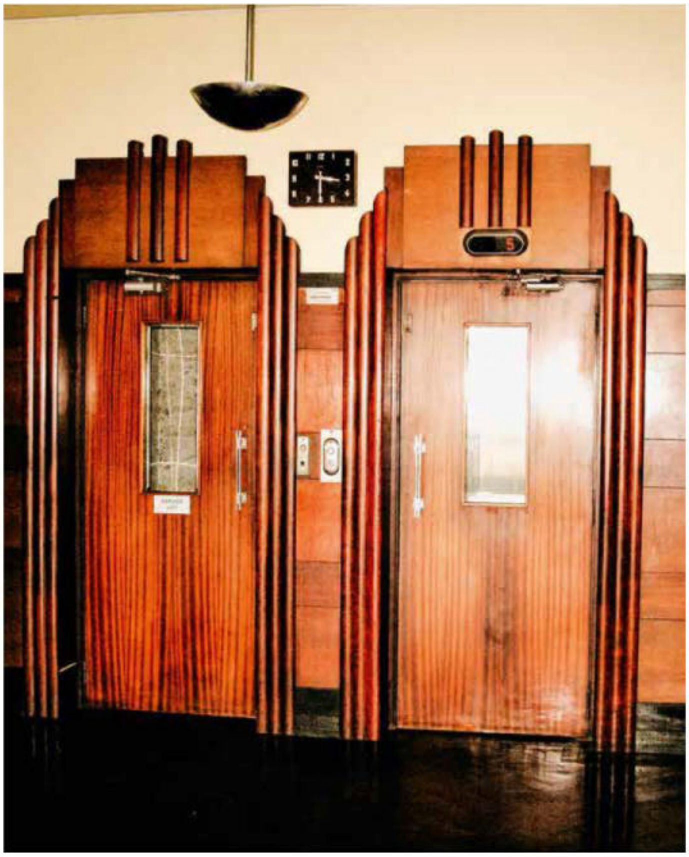
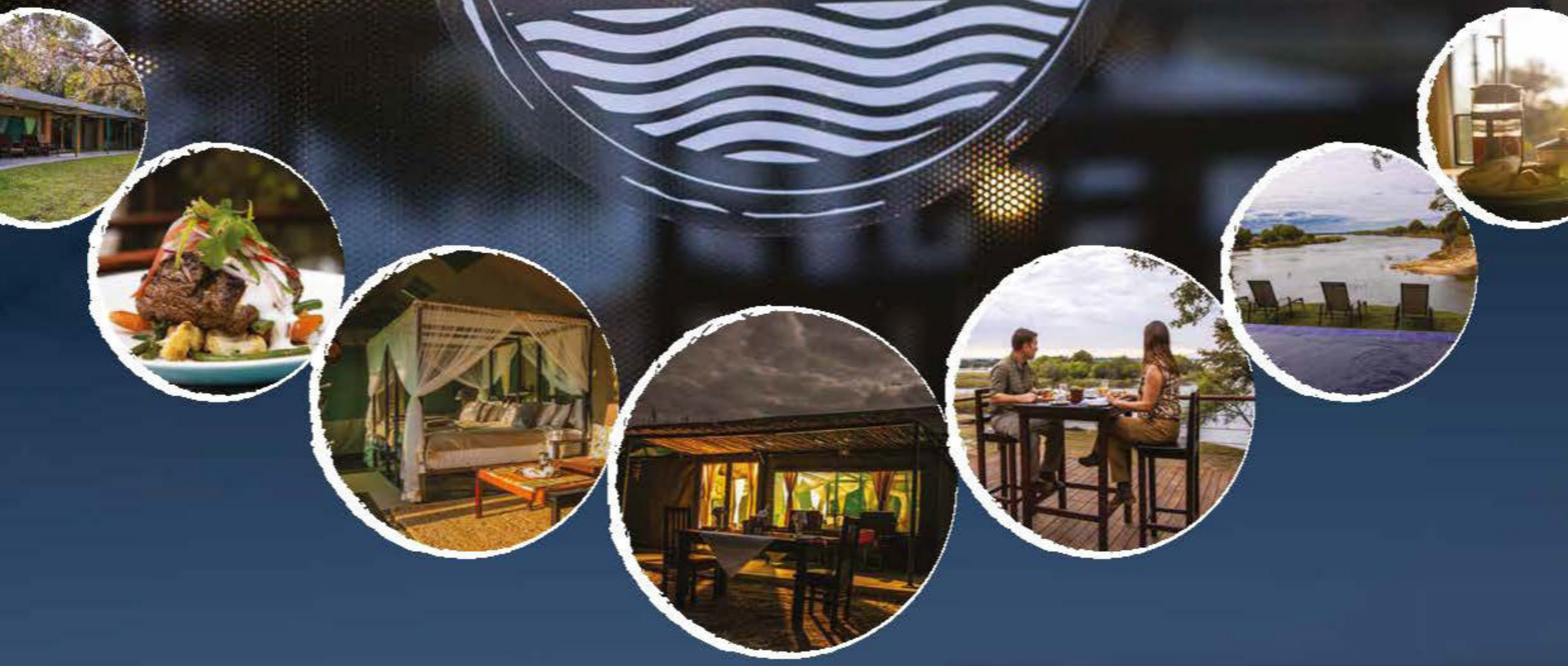


TELL IT TO THE GENERATION FOLLOWING



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Located in the Zambezi National Park, only 32 km away from Victoria Falls is

SIAN SIMBA RIVER LODGE!

Offering 12 luxury tented en-suite rooms, including joining family accommodation.

FISHING

ISLAND LUNCH (seasonal)

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Built in 1939, The Edward hotel was world-famous, hosting princes and presidents, field marshals, millionaires and movie stars. A matching sixth floor was added in 1963, and a seventh with a new decorative pediment on the skyline above the entrance facade, was completed in 1996.
149 OR Tambo (Marine) Parade

DR YUSUF DADOO STREET

People of Indian descent settled in and around the old Grey and Broad Street, adding voluptuous forms and eclectic detailing to their buildings. There are zigzag and chevron patterns, gables and arcades, and verandahs above the pavements. Traces of Egyptian, Classical, Hindu, Islamic and Imperial motifs also abound. The Vedic Temple, built in 1975, is an example of modern Art Deco revival with its geometric modernism and decorative art.
21 Carlisle Street

—

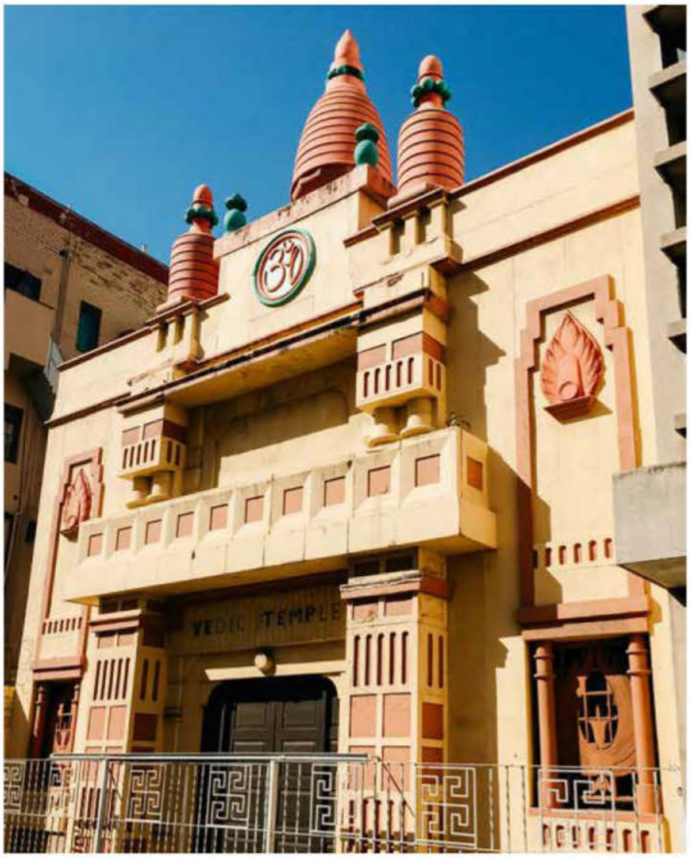
BELOW LEFT The Vedic Temple is an example of where Hinduism meets Art Deco.
BELOW RIGHT Surrey Mansions is one of Durban's grandest Art Deco buildings, with its various layers of rich detailing and stucco reliefs.

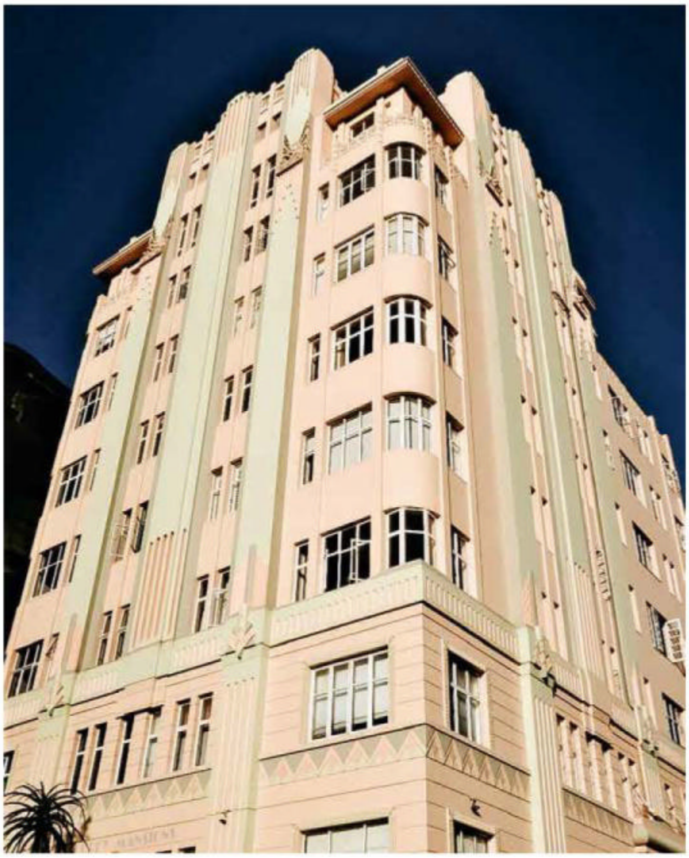
One of the more striking buildings in the area is Broadwindsor, crowned as it is with a pair of towering cranes seeking the sky above. Built in 1935, it has strong vertical design bands that drive upwards from the entrance hall.
7 Dr Yusuf Dadoo (Broad) Street

THE BEREA

Perhaps the finest of Durban's Art Deco buildings are to be found on the Berea, that ridge on the northern side overlooking the city centre and the Indian Ocean. It gives a strong sense of place. And of these, Surrey Mansions on Currie Road is arguably the grandest. The eight-storey block of flats was completed in 1934 and has layers of detailing and stucco reliefs.
323 Currie Road

Coming a close second is Cheviot Court, with its rounded corners encountering straight lines, giving a sense of motion and reflecting Durban as a city of ships, horses, fast cars and sultry living. Also from 1934, it fits comfortably in the Art Deco Streamline Moderne style, with its flagpole and crest motifs.
676 Musgrave Road





The Oyster Box

The Oyster Box.

Randeree Charitable Trust.

Walk It

The Durban Art Deco Society is a trove of information and has maps marking where the significant buildings are to be found. It also has a DIY walking and driving tour.
durbandeco.co.za

Durban Walking Tours does just that – guided walks around some of Durban's most interesting and historical places. As they say, there is no better way to see the city than on foot with a local.
082 888 8855,
084 542 0822,
durbanwalkingtours.co.za

Stay Here

THE OYSTER BOX

It's a short ride outside town, on the uMhlanga beachfront, but this genteel hotel is perfectly suited to an elegant holiday. It's set amid lush sub-tropical gardens planted with wild figs, ancient milkwoods, princess palms, wild orchids, and hibiscus. Some suites and villas have private plunge pools, for other rooms there are two large swimming pools. It even welcomes well-behaved pets.
From R7 893 a room pn
031 514 5000,
oysterboxhotel.com

THE EDWARD

Right on the Golden Mile and in the Southern Sun stable, expect comfort and location convenience. It's a hop, skip and jump to uShaka Marine World, New Pier and North Beach with a fitness centre and a pool if salt water is not your favourite.
From R1 650 for a city-facing room, per room pn
031 337 3681,
southernsun.com/the-edward

SUNCOAST HOTEL AND TOWERS

There are two hotels in the precinct, the Suncoast finished with Art Deco inspired furnishings. Both have city- and sea-facing rooms. It's right on the 7km-long Durban Promenade and just steps from the beach, which means walk, cycle, run and yes, swim. There is also the Suncoast Casino, more than 20 eateries, a cinema and the Barnyard Theatre.
From R1 895 for a city-facing room, single tariff, per room pn
031 328 3000,
tsogosungaming.com/hotel/suncoast-hotel

ELANGENI AND MAHARANI

This is a landmark on Durban's beachfront that has been welcoming holidaymakers for nearly five decades. Sea views, three pools and loads of dining options are part of the package.
From R1 895 per room pn
031 362 1300,
southernsun.com/southern-sun-elangeni-maharani

PHOTOGRAPHY DURBAN ART-DECO SOCIETY, GALLO IMAGES/ALAMY, COURTESY IMAGES

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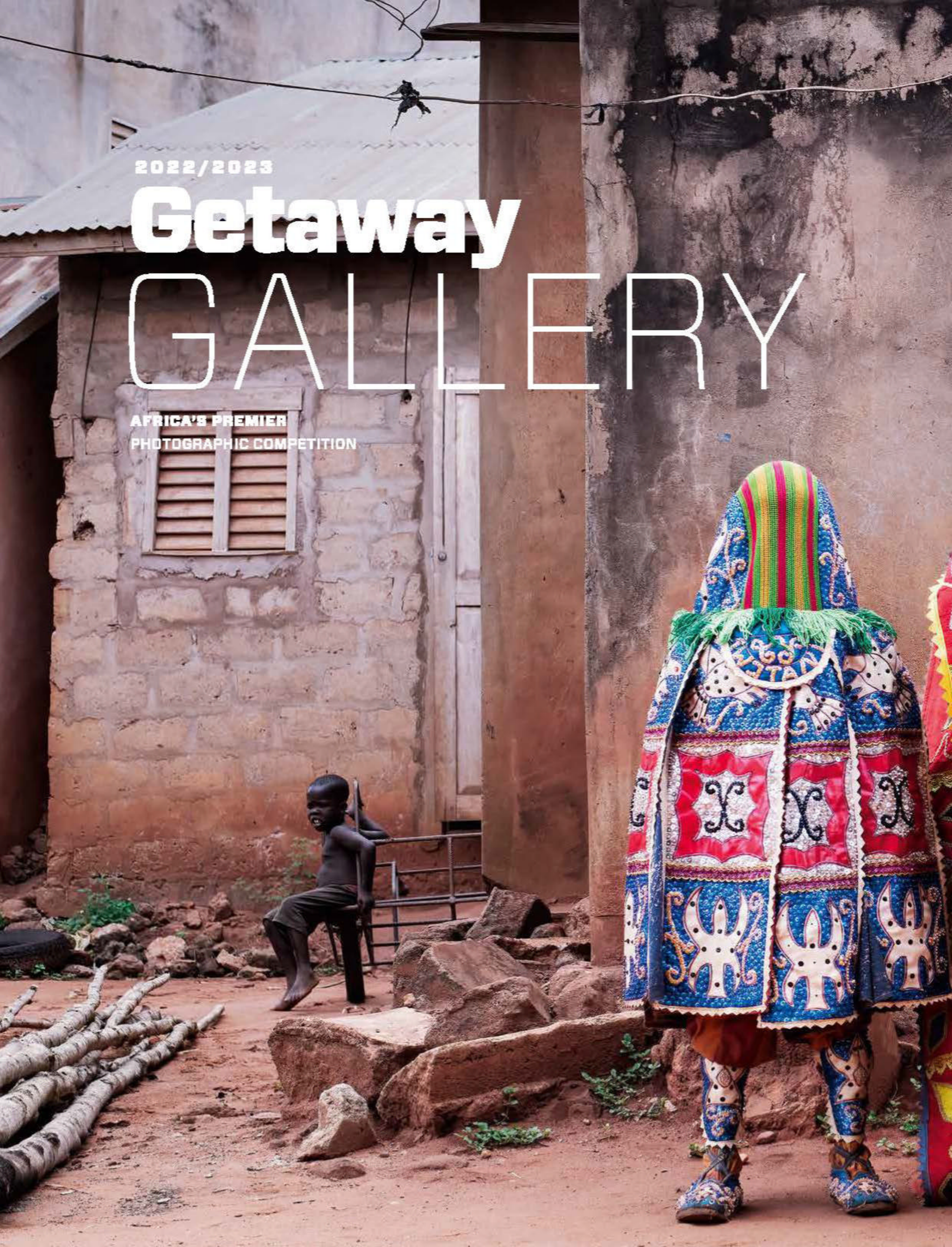
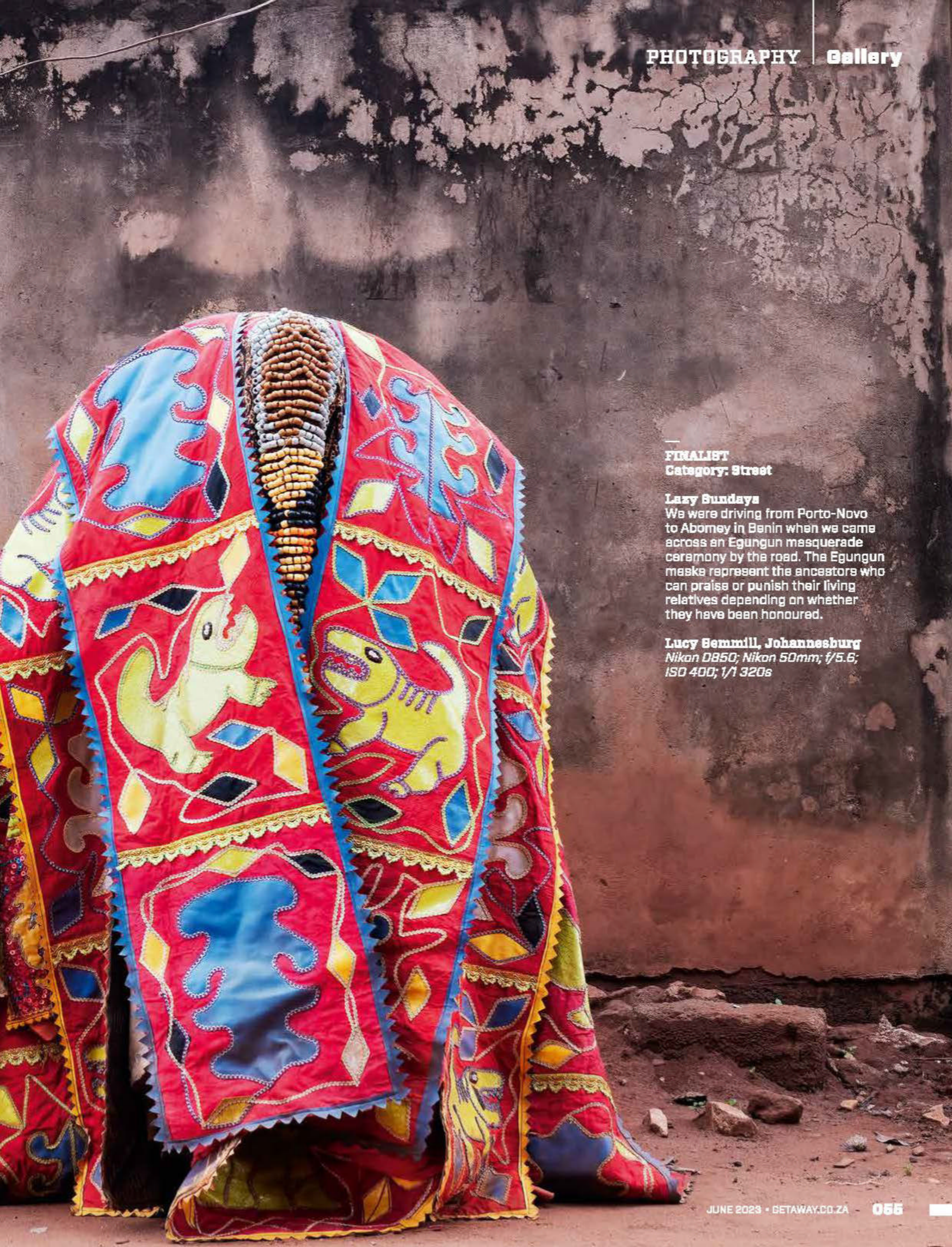


2022/2023

Getaway GALLERY

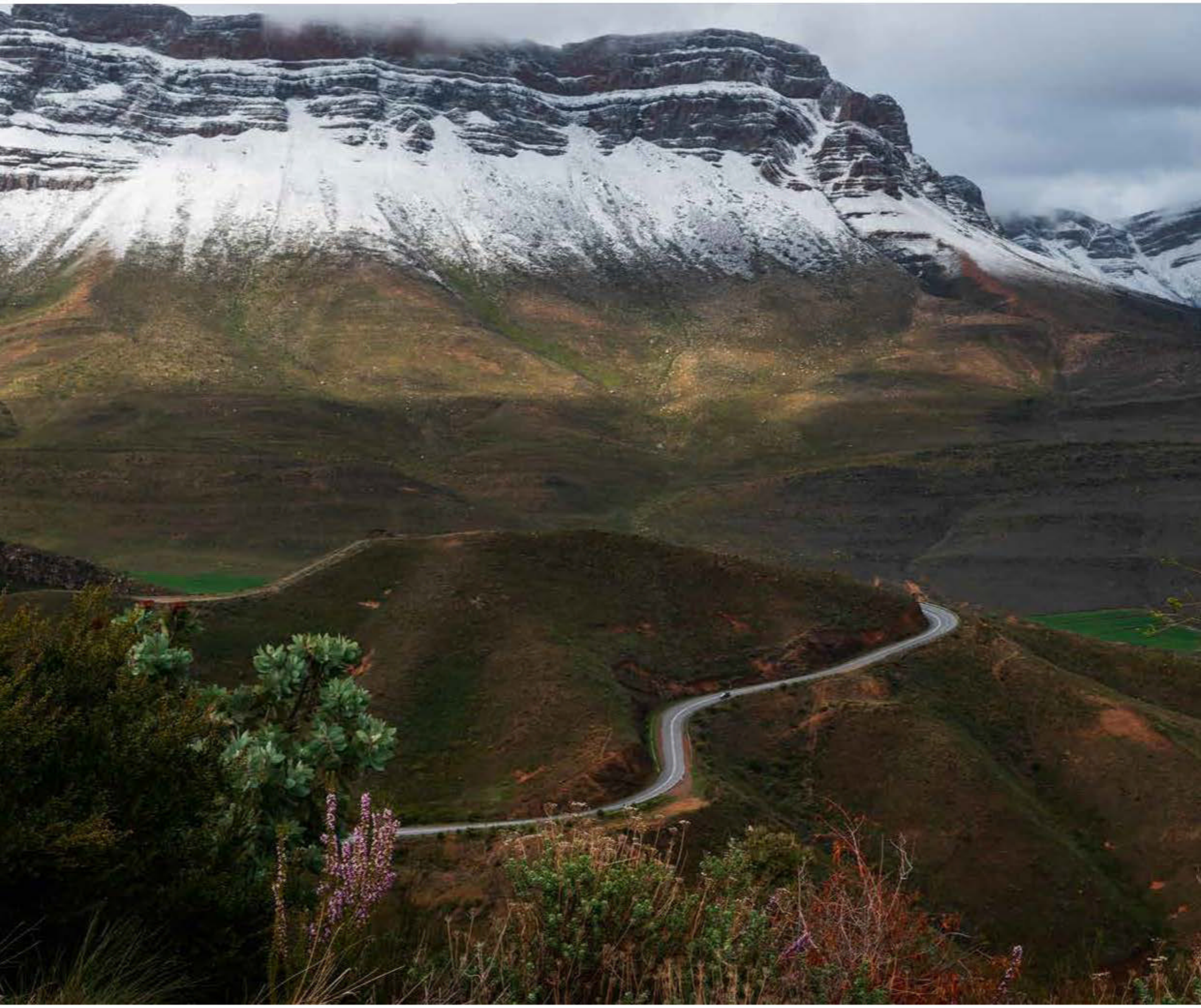
AFRICA'S PREMIER PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION



FINALIST
Category: Street

Lazy Sundays
We were driving from Porto-Novo to Abomey in Benin when we came across an Egungun masquerade ceremony by the road. The Egungun masks represent the ancestors who can praise or punish their living relatives depending on whether they have been honoured.

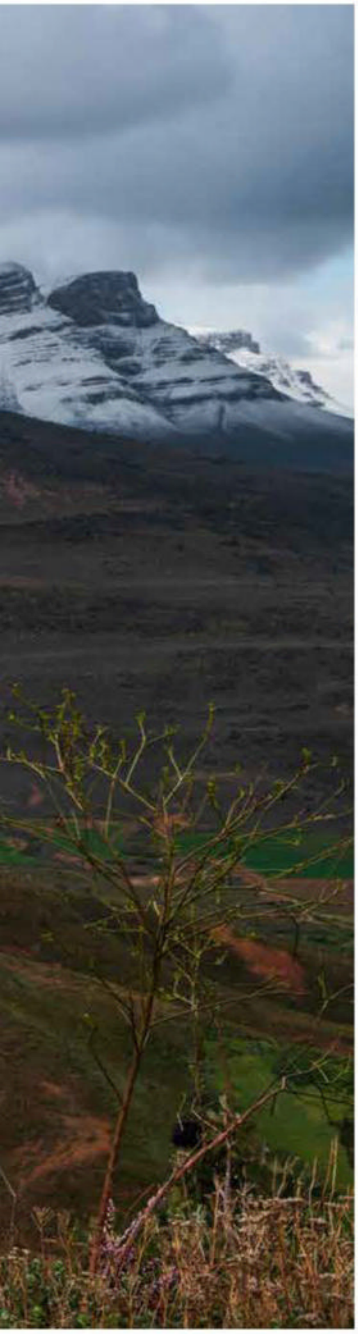
Lucy Semmill, Johannesburg
Nikon D850; Nikon 50mm; f/5.6; ISO 400; 1/1 320s

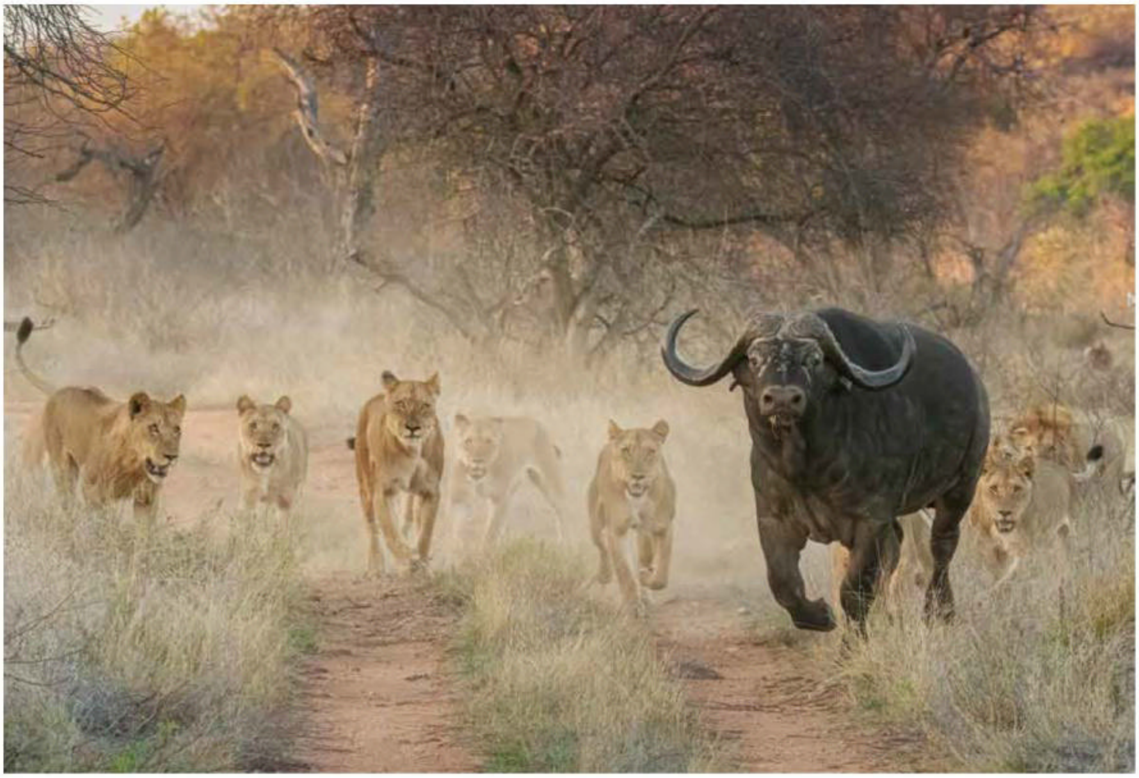


FINALIST
Category: Landscape

Gydo Pass
Travelling through the Koue Bokkeveld, we landed on top of the Gydo Pass and witnessed these majestic snow-covered mountains. The scale of these is made evident by the lone car travelling down the winding road.

Retha Wepener, Cape Town
Nikon Z5; 24-70; f11; ISO 100; 1/100s





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FINALIST
Category: Wildlife

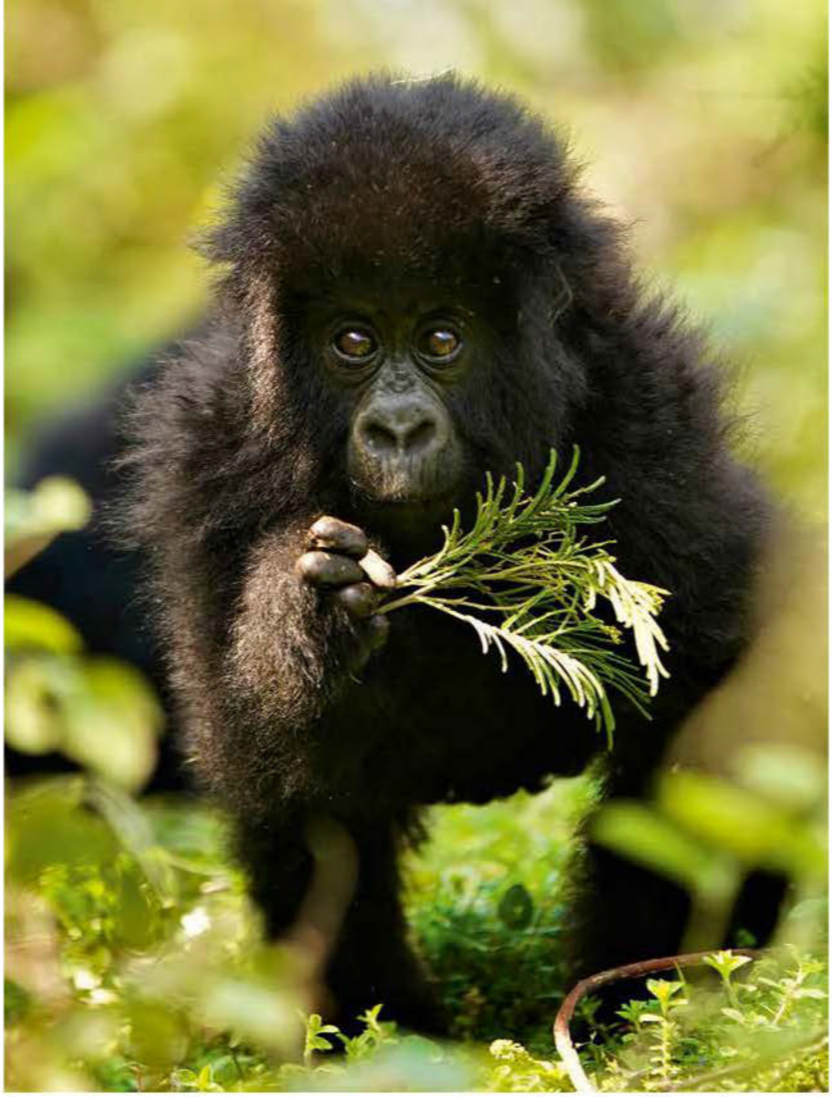
The Chase
On an afternoon game drive along the Klaserie River, you can never be sure what nature has in store. As the sun set, the mighty Klaserie River pride launched a surprise attack on a formidable 'dagga boy', a buffalo bull. The pride's fierce determination was evident as they stalked their prey before surging forward in a co-ordinated attack. Despite the buffalo's fierce resistance, the lions were relentless, their jaws locked onto the massive frame of their prey. In the end, the pride emerged victorious, their triumphant roars echoing through the valley. It was a stunning display of nature's raw power and beauty.

Nicholas Smith, Hoedspruit
Nikon D500; Nikon 200–500mm f/5.6; ISO 8 000; f/10; 1/1 000s

FINALIST
Category: Wildlife

Bundle of Joy
It was a lifetime dream to see and spend time with a gorilla family. We trekked in Rwanda (also a first, and I fell in love with her and her people). We chose the easy trek, my theory being that I wasn't there to do exercise, and I couldn't wait for my dream to come true. We didn't trek far into the Volcanoes National Park when we found this family. We were standing on a steep slope and I had to negotiate my way around other guests because my hands were shaking with excitement – I couldn't believe I was actually there. The family were relaxed and walked around us. I calmed myself and got my settings to what I hoped would work. It's hard to capture a moment of a lifetime, but I tried.

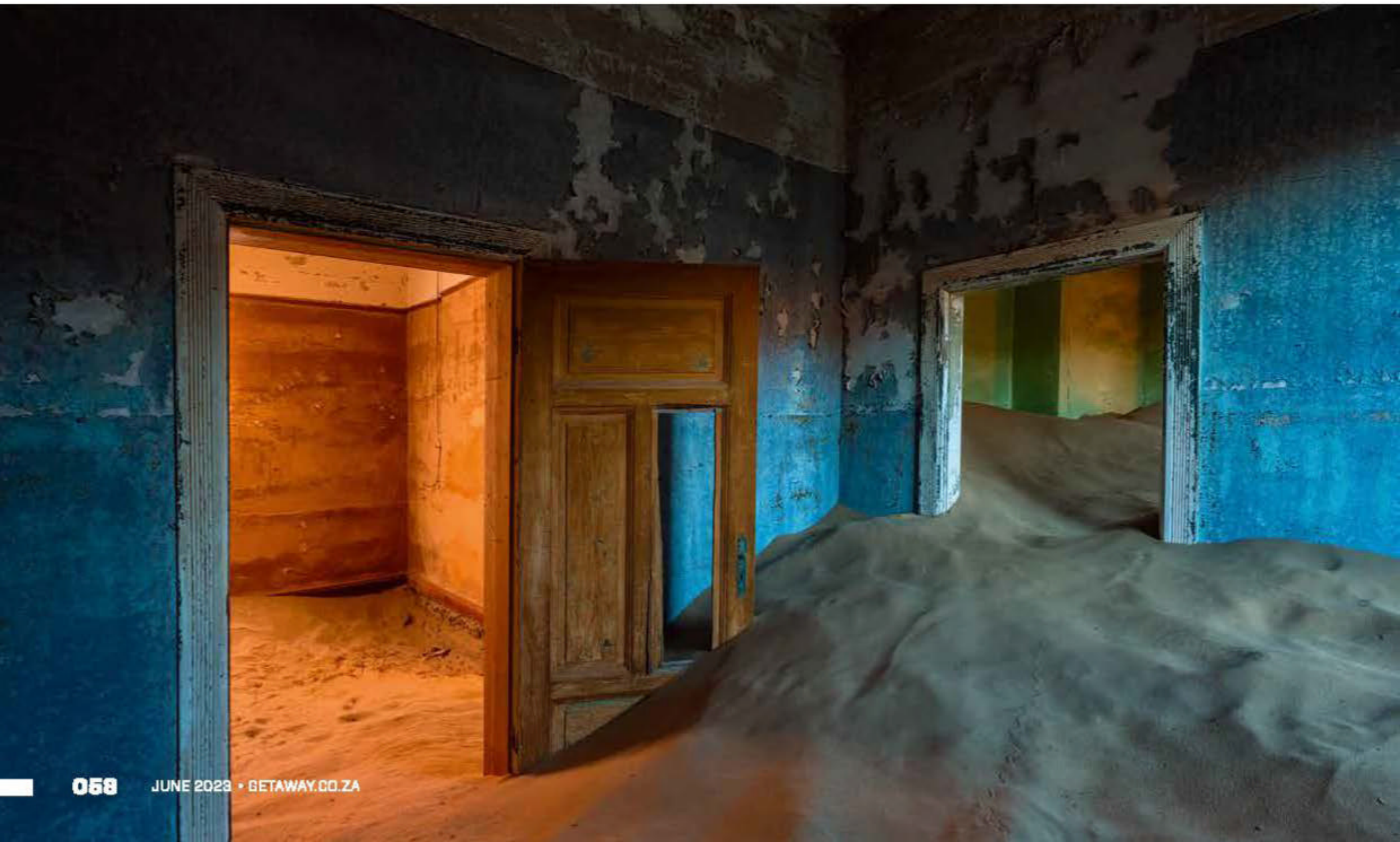
Steven Lake, Cape Town
Canon 70D; 70-200MM f/2.8; ISO 640; f2.8; 1/640s



FINALIST
Category: Travel

Room Red Light
This is of an abandoned house that filled with sand over the years in the well-known and famous ghost town of Kolmanskop in Namibia. Early in the morning, the rising sun comes through the open windows of these old houses, creating a golden glow on the sand, and the orange or yellow door contrasts with the blue walls of this specific house.

Willem Kruger, Bloemfontein
Nikon D800; Nikkor 17-35 mm f/2.8; ISO 200; f16; 6s



UP FOR GRABS IN OUR 2022/2023 PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

Kwetsani

We've expanded the focus of our *Getaway* Gallery competition beyond its traditional pillar of wildlife photography by introducing a handful of genre categories. Our aim is to create a platform for photographers to explore their talent within a variety of travel-related genres. There are five categories:

Travel and Destination

Have you been to some distant shores with a camera in hand? Have you travelled to Mongolia in winter, Ireland in summer or Paternoster in spring? If you haven't travelled afar, don't be deterred, we're more interested in the image than the location.

Drone and Landscape Photography

With drone photography on the rise and the quality of landscape photography in South Africa particularly impressive, this is the place to see what bangers local talent is capturing.

Wildlife

Anything from feathers to fangs, our *Getaway* readers have been producing world-class wildlife images for more than 30 years.

People and Culture

Documentary photography is a challenging prospect but it is vital in telling important stories. What story do you want to tell and can you tell it in a single frame?

Street Photography

We are looking for grungy, unexpected and often on-the-fly expressions of urban scenes – hit the tar (or gravel) and show us what you see.

EMERGING TALENT

Apart from these five categories, we're also looking for up-and-coming photographers, from complete newbies and novices to folks who have an eye for it, but never thought to give it their best shot. If you're new to this game, you might want to let us know that you'd like to be considered for this prize, too.

Please encourage children, students, eager-to-learn first-timers, keen-to-grow amateurs or any budding photographers you meet, to send in their pictures. This is more 'keen eye' than 'fancy equipment' photography and is all about identifying new talent.

WILDERNESS

ORMS
EVERYTHING PHOTOGRAPHIC

Canon

GRAND PRIZE

Four nights for two people on a dream safari in Botswana with Wilderness valued at $15 129 (R250 000), plus a Canon EOS R7 Mirrorless Camera Body with EF to R Mount Adapter and a Canon RF 100-500mm Lens from ORMS valued at R78 790.

Canon
EOS
R7

Our overall winner and a partner will be whisked off on a four-night stay at one of Wilderness' Classic Camps in Botswana, including meals, game drives and internal air transfers with Wilderness Air. This holiday-of-a-lifetime will be available for our prize winner to undertake between November 2023 and May 2024.

Wilderness pioneered the Okavango Delta safari nearly 40 years ago, and today runs more than 40 luxury camps across seven countries in some of Africa's most pristine tracts of wilderness. The Classic Camps in the Okavango Delta and Linyanti reserve are unfenced, untouched and exquisitely situated for outstanding game viewing and endless photographic opportunities. Have a look at the Wilderness camps and experiences across the continent at ***wildernessdestinations.com***.

SECOND PRIZE

Our second-placed prize winner will receive a Canon EOS R10 Mirrorless Camera Body with EF to R Mount Adapter and a Canon RF 100-400mm Lens from ORMS valued at R27 990.

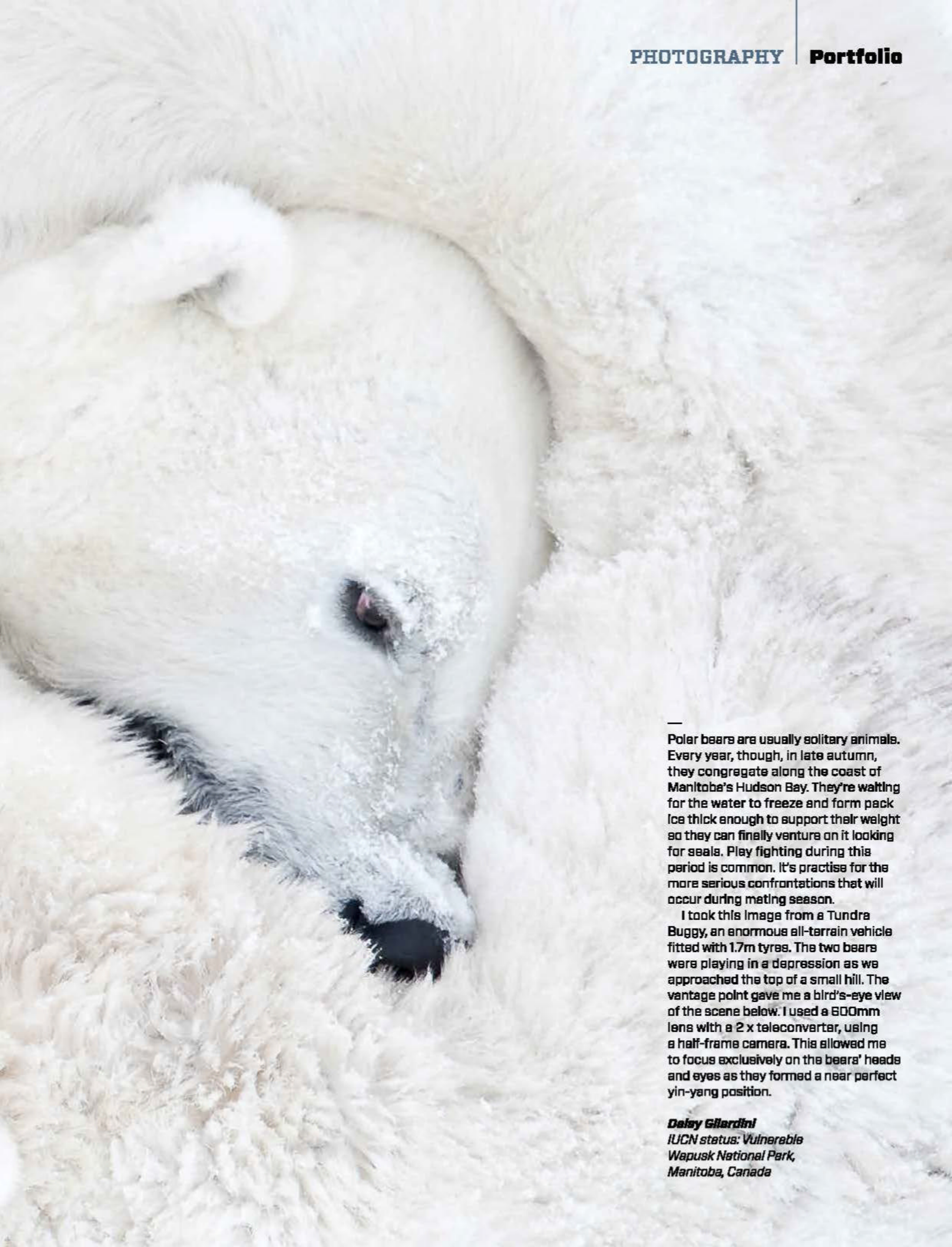
THIRD PRIZE

Third prize is a Canon PowerShot SX70 Camera from ORMS valued at R10 385.

ORMS is a highly respected Cape Town-based dealer in photographic equipment. Through the ORMS Print Room & Framing department, ORMS also offers professional fine art and décor services, which include an array of printing services, custom framing, and the production of wallpapers and textiles, photobooks and much more. For more information, visit ***ormsdirect.co.za***.

THE NEW
BIG FIVE

BRITISH WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER **GRAEME GREEN** CURATES SOME OF HIS FAVOURITE RECENT IMAGES FROM THE NEW BIG 5 PROJECT, WHICH HE STARTED IN 2020, INVITING PEOPLE WORLDWIDE TO VOTE FOR THE FIVE ANIMALS THEY MOST LIKE TO PHOTOGRAPH AND SEE IN PHOTOS – ALL SORTS OF SPECIES, FROM BEES TO BLUE WHALES



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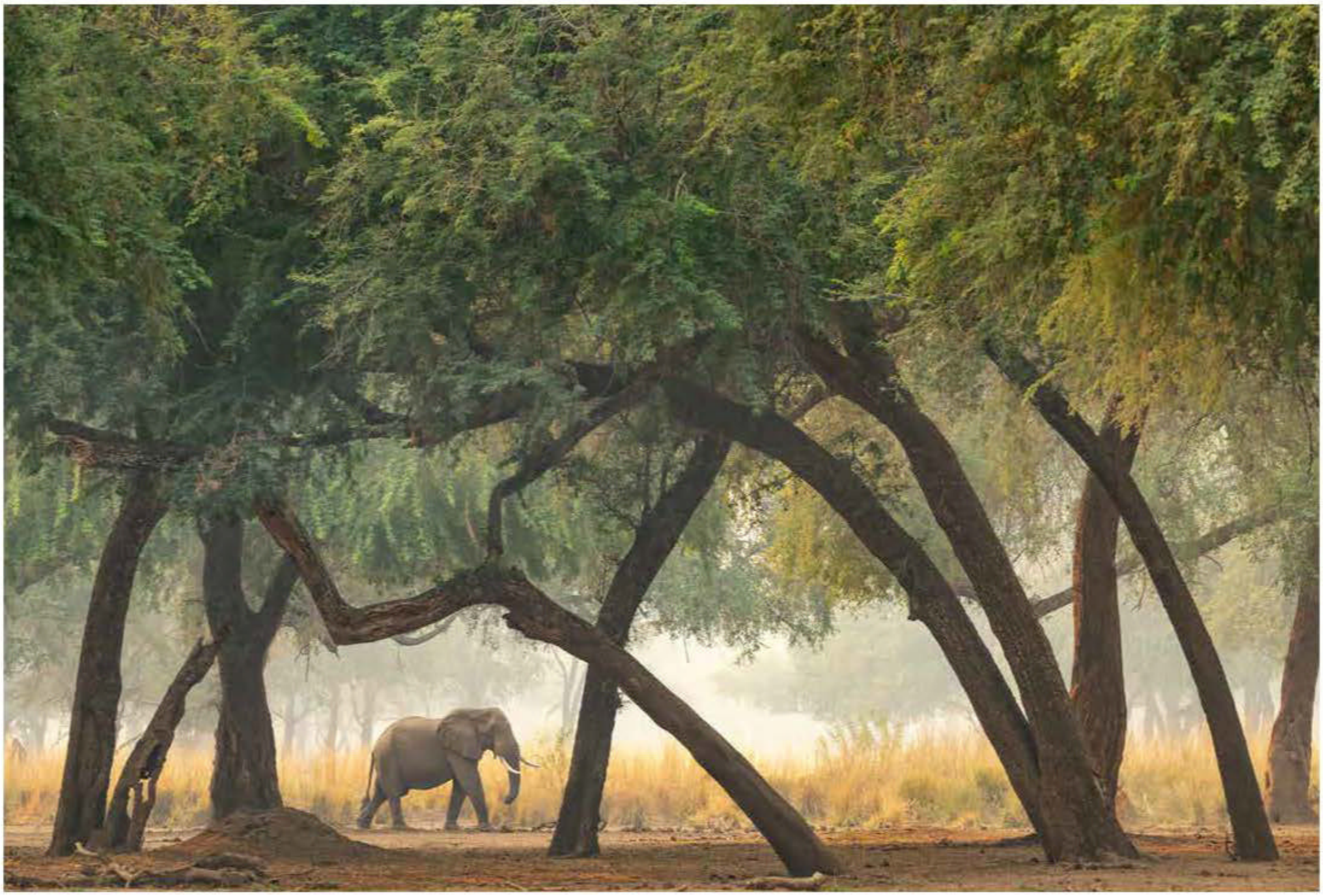
Polar bears are usually solitary animals. Every year, though, in late autumn, they congregate along the coast of Manitoba's Hudson Bay. They're waiting for the water to freeze and form pack ice thick enough to support their weight so they can finally venture on it looking for seals. Play fighting during this period is common. It's practise for the more serious confrontations that will occur during mating season.

I took this image from a Tundra Buggy, an enormous all-terrain vehicle fitted with 1.7m tyres. The two bears were playing in a depression as we approached the top of a small hill. The vantage point gave me a bird's-eye view of the scene below. I used a 600mm lens with a 2 x teleconverter, using a half-frame camera. This allowed me to focus exclusively on the bears' heads and eyes as they formed a near perfect yin-yang position.

Daisy Gilardini
IUCN status: Vulnerable
Wapusk National Park,
Manitoba, Canada

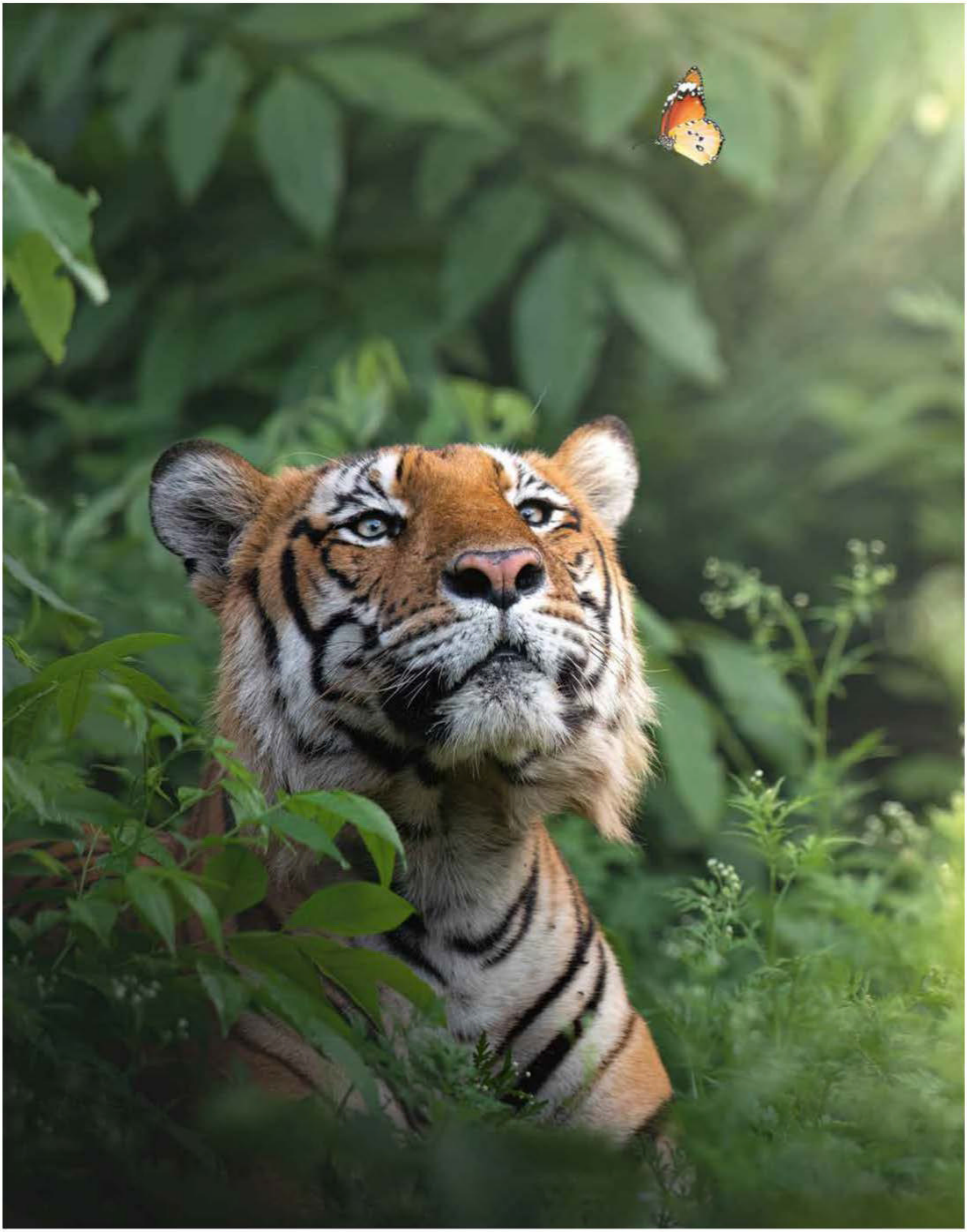


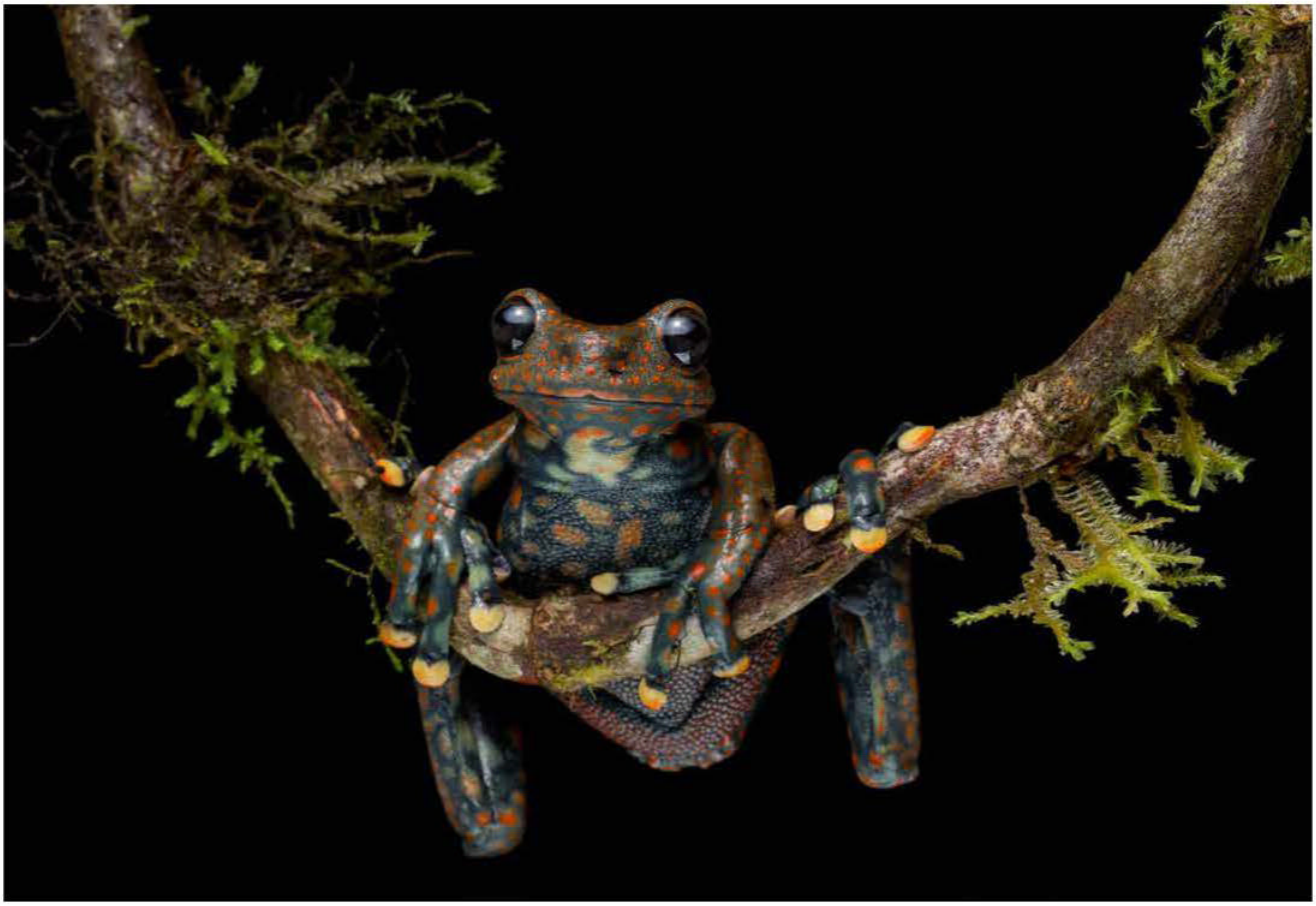
ABOVE I shot this image in Lower Zambezi National Park, Zambia. It's the direct result of my favourite creative tool: previsualisation. My approach is often the opposite of most wildlife photographers – instead of going where the animals are, I go where I want the animals to be. The landscape and the setting are more important to me than the species. In this case, I spotted this beautiful constellation of tree trunks and immediately saw the potential for a great animalscape. I decided to get into the perfect position and simply wait for an animal to walk into the natural frame. Luckily, the area has plenty of elephants, so eventually, an elephant walked into my frame and I couldn't have been happier.

Marsel van Oosten
IUCN status: Endangered
Lower Zambezi National Park, Zambia

RIGHT This is a Bengal tiger, photographed in the forests of Nagarahole in Karnataka. We spent the entire morning driving around and scanning the forest to hopefully spot the big cat. We were listening to deer and monkey alarm calls but still had failed to get any stone action from the cat itself. After a while, when all seemed silent, this big male Bengal tiger just revealed itself out of the jungle. It was stalking a male deer but he soon lost interest in deer and decided to lie down close by our vehicle and just wait there when this butterfly went past.

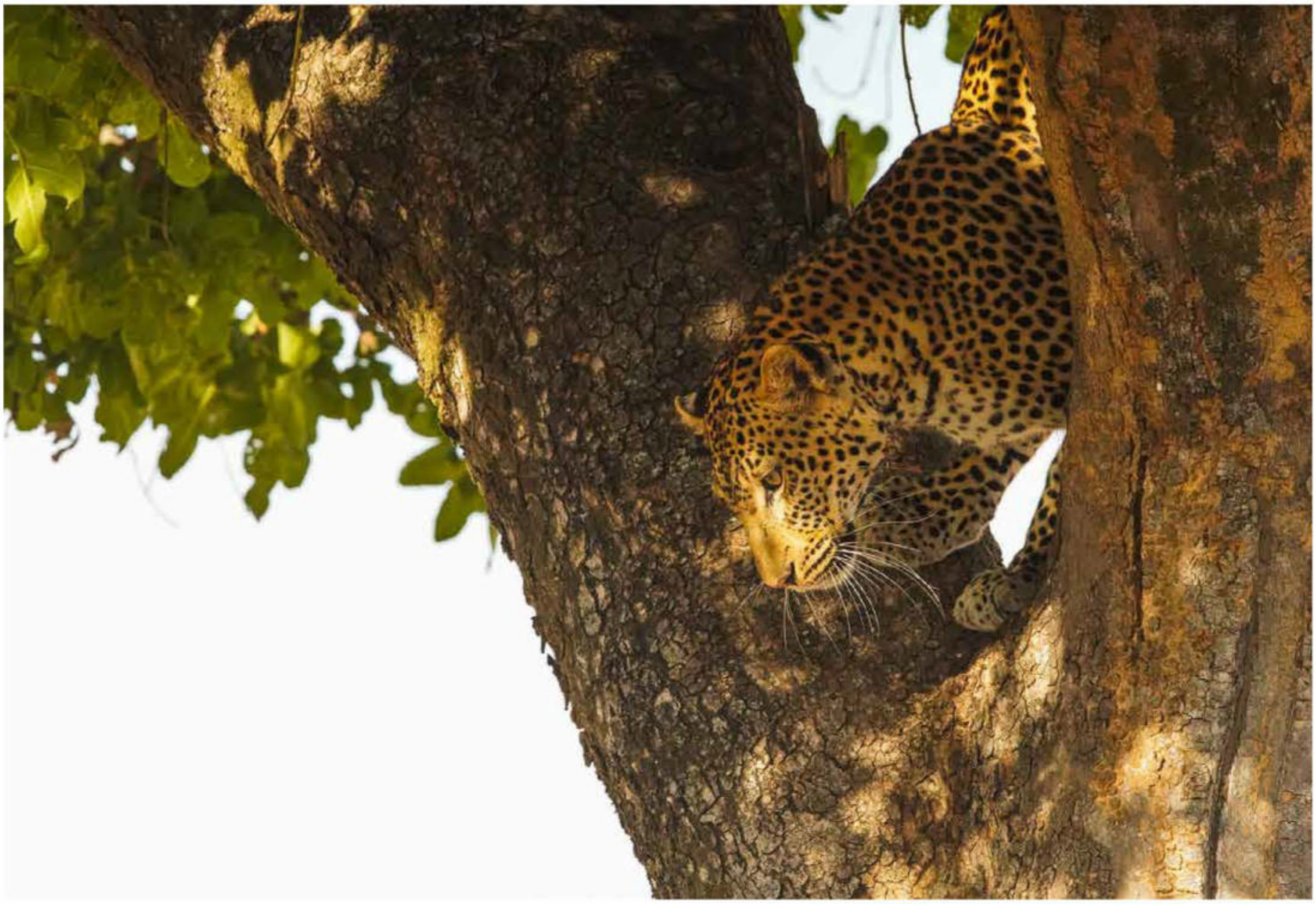
Sujusan Gasim
IUCN status: Endangered
Nagarahole Tiger Reserve, India





ABOVE This is the spotted torrent frog, one of the most beautiful frogs on Earth. These Andean frogs live on very restricted waterfalls around the Andean foothills. They measure around 10cm, and are characterised by their striking colours and patterns, including the tips of their fingers, where each species has its own colour of 'nail polish'. Because of their very specific distribution, they are vulnerable to changes in their habitats, so it's essential to preserve their ecosystems.

Lucas Bustamante
IUCN status: Critically endangered
Santa Barbara Park, Ecuador

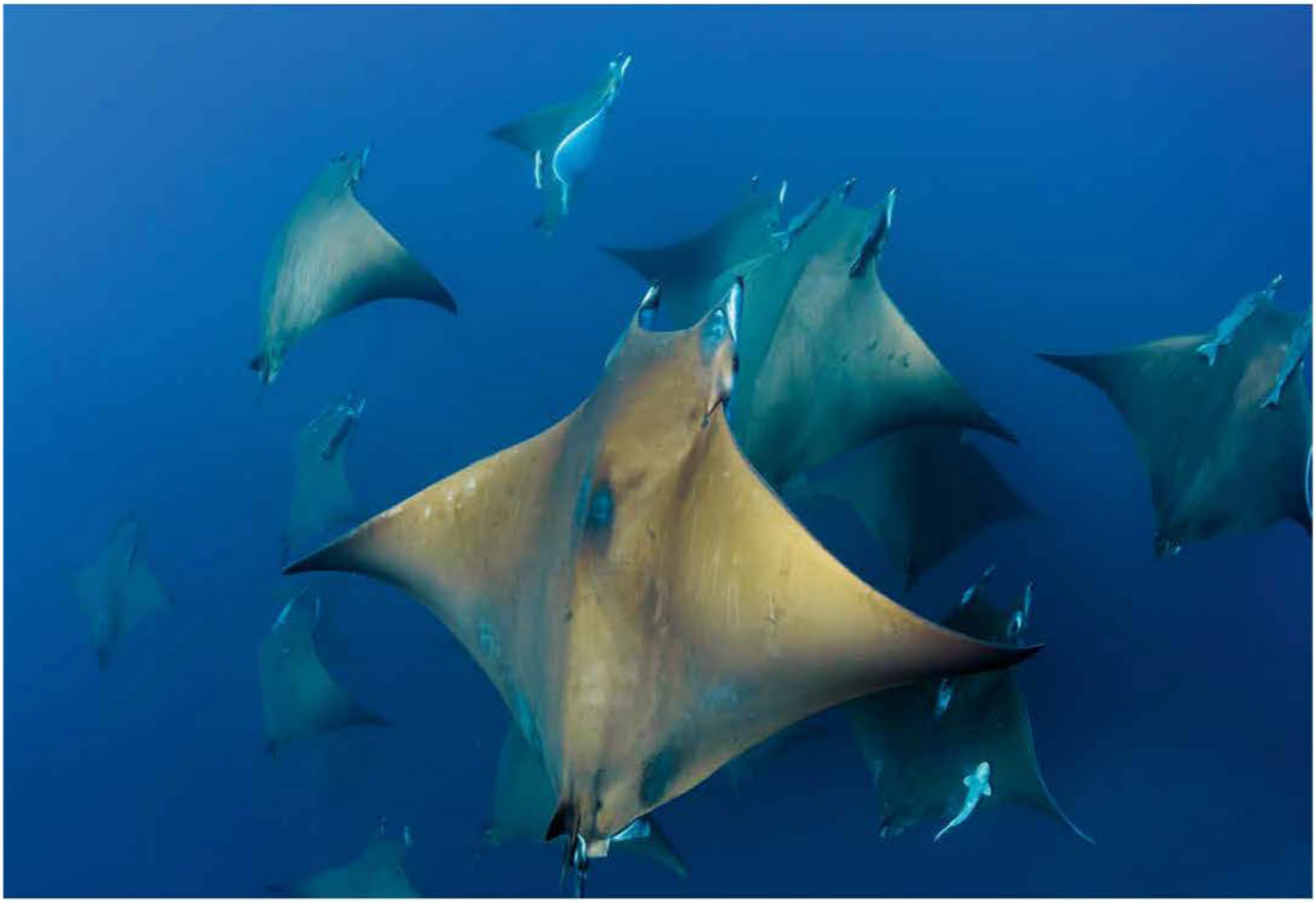


ABOVE Leopards are incredibly elegant animals, with one of the most beautiful coats in the natural world. They're also powerful and agile, which makes them excellent hunters. But it's extremely unusual to see leopards hunting from trees, which is what's happening in this image. The leopard is eyeing an unfortunate impala grazing obliviously on the grass below the baobab tree. The leopard had been resting in the branches but seized the opportunity when it presented itself, eyeing the impala, then bounding down the trunk and pouncing. As a wildlife photographer, I am not very interested in 'kills' but did want to capture this remarkable and rare behaviour of hunting from a tree – or death from above.

Graeme Green
IUCN status: Vulnerable
Ruaha National Park, Tanzania

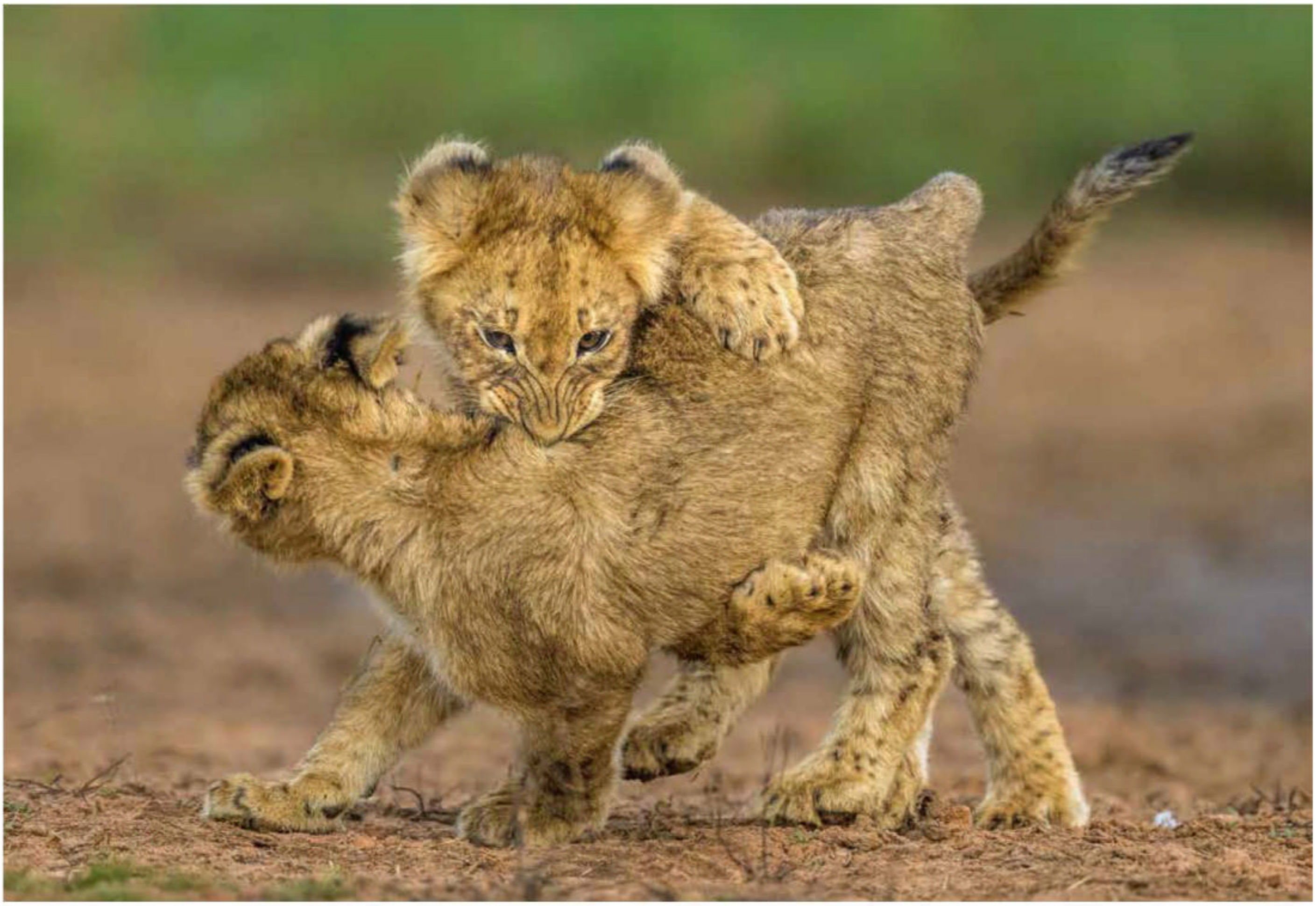
BELOW A large group of Chilean devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*), all with a wingspan of three to four metres, socialise over Azore's Princess Alice Seamount in the late summer. Here, they pass the photographer hanging over the underwater mountain. Chilean devil rays are considered one of the deepest divers in the ocean. A recent study in the Azores found that Chilean devil rays dive to extreme depths, reaching at least 1 800m.

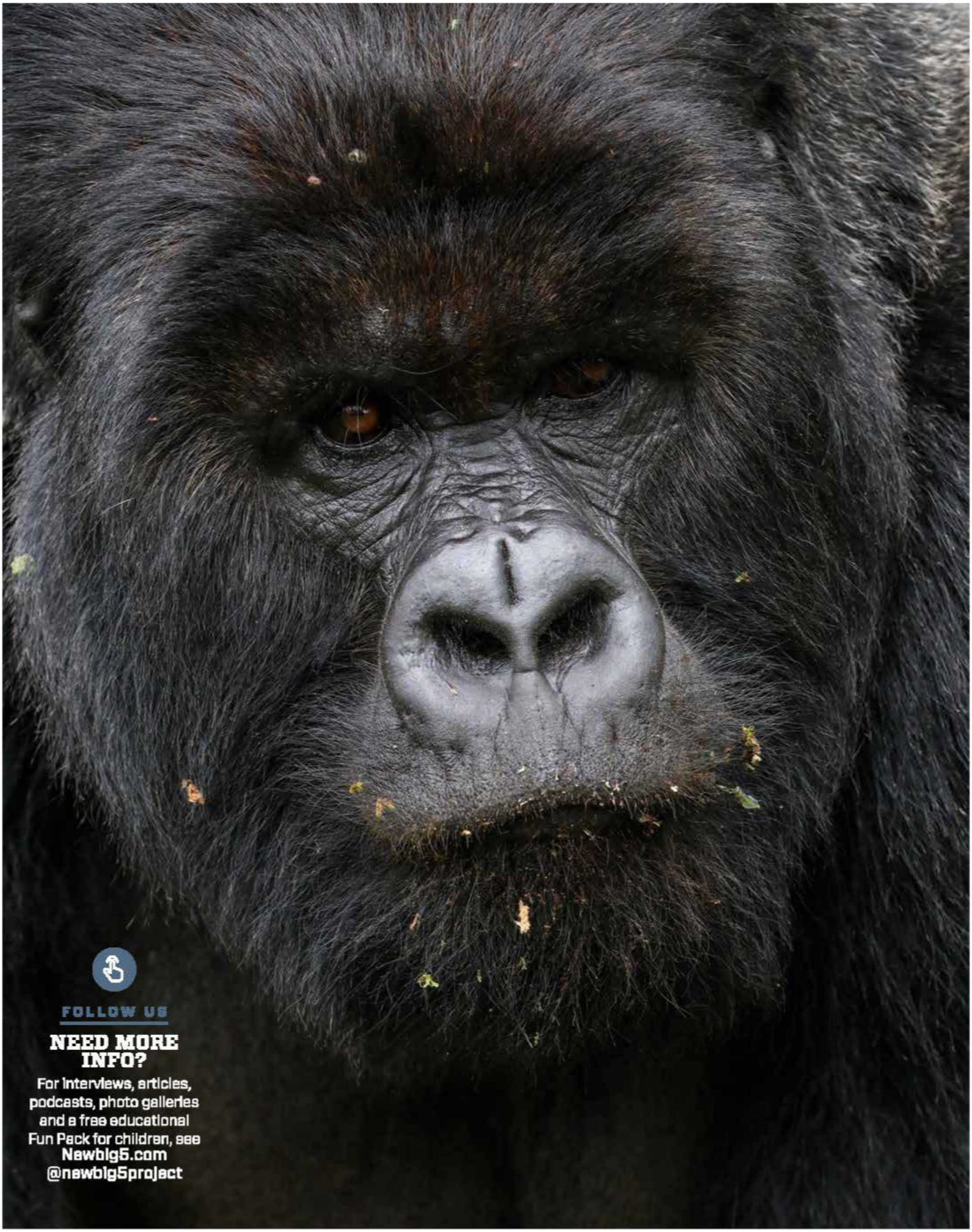
Magnus Lundgren
IUCN status: Endangered
The Azores, Portugal



BELOW At 120 000ha, Tswalu Kalahari Reserve is South Africa's largest private protected area. Lying on my stomach on the floor of a photographic vehicle, this rough-and-tumble image captured one moment in a wonderful 15-minute session of sneak attacks, tugs-of-war and wrestling at a waterhole, while the youngsters' mother rested with the other adults in the shade of a nearby tree.

Marcus Westberg
IUCN status: Vulnerable
Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa





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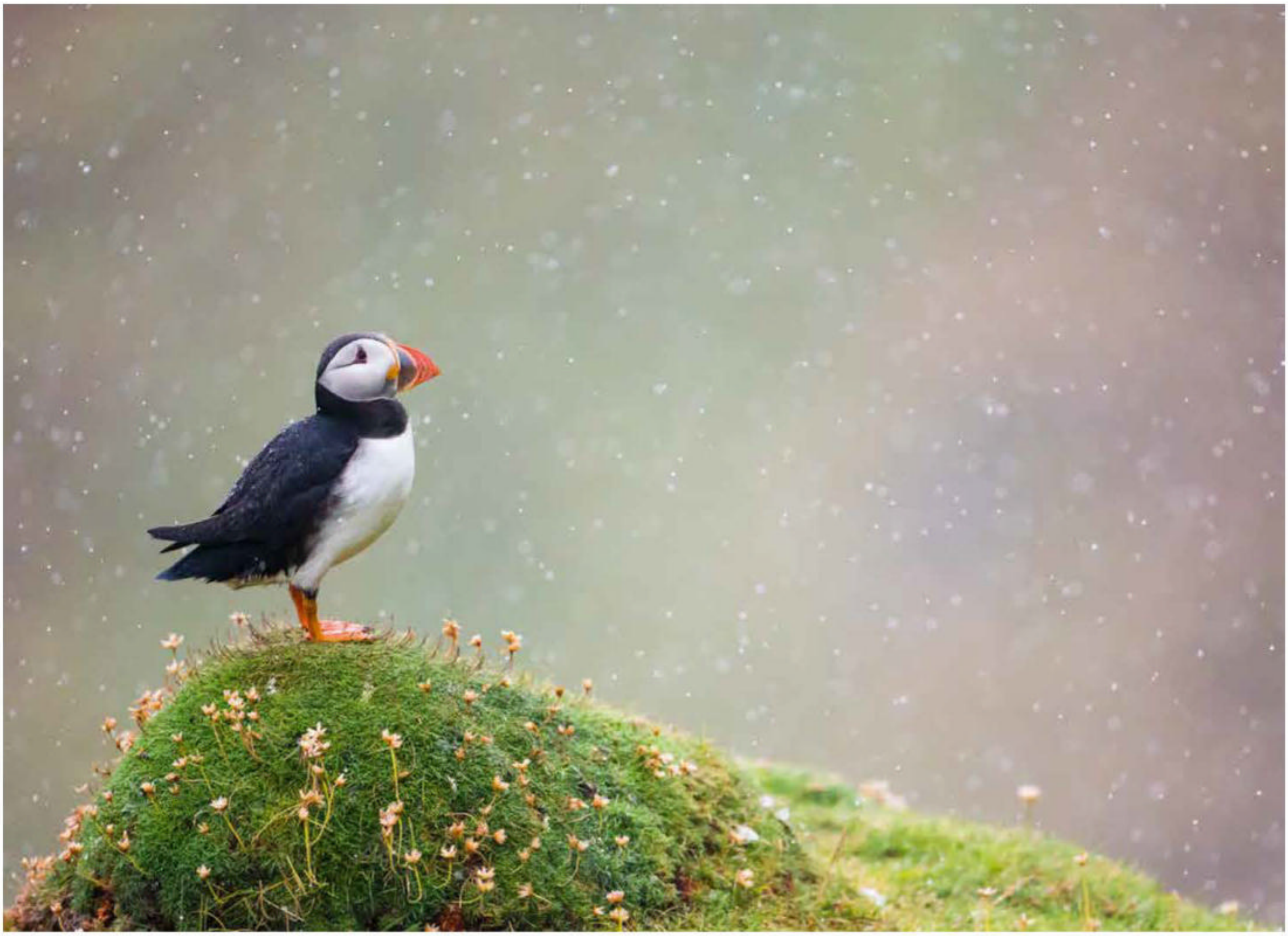
LEFT This is Marambo, one of the largest silverbacks in Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park, taken on the forested slopes of Sabyinyo Volcano. The head of the Mahoza family, he's a gentle giant, weighing around 200kg. He spends most of his time as a quiet, powerful presence watching over adult females, juveniles and babies in his group.

Mountain gorillas are challenging to photograph, as they move quickly in and out of undergrowth, the light and positioning constantly changing, and you can't get too close, for their sake and yours. I wanted to take up-close portraits that give a sense of what it's like to stand eye to eye with the world's largest primate and one of nature's wonders.

Graeme Green
IUCN Status: Endangered
Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda

BELOW The Atlantic puffin's global population is on a downward trend. Several factors contribute to this, including unsustainable fishing, marine pollution and invasive ground predators, but their main threat arises from the change in distribution and numbers of their primary food source, sand eels. This is due to rising sea temperatures reducing the numbers of plankton in our oceans, the main food source for sand eels, which are in turn the puffins' primary food. A reduction in plankton in our waters has a monumental impact on the food chain, with puffins being forced to abandon their regular feeding grounds in the North Sea and instead journey far into the Atlantic in search of sand eels. These travails leave parent birds exhausted and pufflings without food for extended periods, leading to greatly increased mortality rates in the chicks. With over 10 million adult puffins globally, it's not too late to reverse the downward trend. There is still hope, but salvation can only come from changes in human attitudes and better stewardship of our oceans and coastal environments.

Kevin Morgans
IUCN status: Vulnerable
Hermaness National Nature Reserve, Unst, Shetland



THE TRUTH ABOUT TIGERS

OCEAN CONSERVATIONIST HANLI PRINSLOO ASKS US TO FORGET WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW ABOUT SHARKS, STARTING WITH THE MOST GRACEFUL AND INQUISITIVE OF THEM ALL

Words **Hanli Prinsloo**

PHOTOGRAPHY PETER MARSHALL

Hanli Prinsloo slowly approaches a large female tiger shark in The Bahamas.

Building trust allows for an intimate belly-to-belly swim.

I first encountered tiger sharks on Aliwal Shoal in Durban. On a warm day, above 20°C, save for a slight breeze, typical of this part of the world, where winter isn't true to the word, I sat in a boat with photographers and shark experts, drifting on a gentle current – waiting. One black-tipped fin, then two, three and four appeared, and like a pack of terriers, a shiver of blacktip sharks dashed at sardines thrown into the water, their bright silver sides playing with the light. They seemed oblivious to their beauty, intent on not missing a snack.

I pulled on my fins, positioned my mask and dropped softly into the water. At once, their black tips parted, allowing me to pass. To them, I was just another big fish in the water, scavenging for the same scraps. I floated on the surface, inhaling deeply and slowly through my snorkel and then elongating my exhale even more, causing my heart rate to drop and my mind to quieten. Now ready to dive, I took one more deep breath into my stomach, more air, just a little more, and then with two strong kicks of my fins, I was down. My ears equalised as I kicked and fell. I relaxed my muscles and let the water catch me, pulling me deeper, past neutral

PHOTOGRAPHY JEAN-MARIE GHISLAIN

The Fin Fanatic

I grew up on a farm outside Pretoria, so my love for the ocean stems from a deep love for nature and respect for wilderness. Only later in life did I spend time in and near the ocean, realising it expresses my love for wilderness.

I discovered freediving while studying in Sweden. A friend took me diving in a fjord, where I fell in love with the silence and the experience of being underwater. I became a competitive freediver, travelled internationally and became interested in conservation.

I started I Am Water, an ocean conservation organisation that connects youth with the ocean and works to educate them. It creates transformative experiences for grade seven students who have not experienced the ocean before, helping them understand how their behaviour affects its wellbeing and ecosystem.

My partner Peter and I started I Am Water Ocean Travel as part of a fund-raising effort for the NGO I Am Water Conservation, but also to share our love of the ocean and to do so through responsible encounters with big animals.
iamwaterfoundation.org

buoyancy, through the freefall to the ocean's sandy floor.

Silence. I was alone below 20m, where the sun's rays couldn't reach. Small particles drifted past me as I hung quietly in the dusky light. Looking up, I saw their black tips in tiers. Their improvised dance, silhouetted against the light, could grace grand theatre stages.

Then I saw her, the tiger shark, like the lead actress in a performance, biding her time, waiting in the wings, circling right on the edge of my field of vision. I could tell her apart from the other sharks immediately, her movements as different from theirs as a great eagle's slow, languid circling bears no resemblance to a sparrow's flapping.

Like most of the great predators on our planet, the tiger shark is as misunderstood as it is complex. Yes, it's an intelligent survivor known for eating just about anything, but it's also surprisingly curious and easy to interact with. I felt she was more interested in me than the other sharks.

I've subsequently dived with numerous species of sharks and marine megafauna worldwide, and what never ceases to amaze me is how different they all are. If you grow up with labradors and later spend time with a Jack Russell terrier, you'll see

LUXURY
GLAMPING SAFARI

Nkomazi Private Game Reserve is a family-friendly glamping experience alongside the Komati River, a malaria-free area of The Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga.

Guests can expect all the amenities of a five-star hotel while immersed in the tranquil environment of one of Africa's most diverse ecosystems. Bask in the magnificent surroundings while out on game drives, fishing and birding safari or simply unwind at the riverside retreat Spa, at a bush picnic or on your private deck with a book.

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BY
NEWMARK

A closeup of a tiger shark swimming in the ocean.

Shark-spotting Hot Spots

1. Oahu, Hawaii
2. Tiger Beach, Grand Bahama Island
3. Cocos Island, Costa Rica

disparities between them. I've turned that concept into a fun game I play when diving with sharks, seeing how unalike they are and comparing them to dogs, whose behaviour many people understand better than philosophical descriptions of specific shark species.

I liken the blacktip sharks I encountered free diving on Aliwal Shoal to terriers because they're fast, nippy and more interested in food than interaction. Our beloved seven-gilled sharks cruising in the False Bay kelp forests are like lazy old basset hounds who'd much rather lounge in front of a fire than survive. (But I've never met these so-called cow sharks at night. Apparently, they can transform into pit bulls, which I've yet to see.)

And then, of course, we have tiger sharks, my gracefully swaying, elegant shark of choice, reminiscent of a Great Dane: large, personable and somewhat predictable.

That first dive set a trajectory for my desire to work with sharks and teach people about their behaviour and dispel the myths around them.

I started this work almost 20 years ago, and I feel that, luckily, in the last few years, peoples' opinion of sharks has become more nuanced. We

PHOTOGRAPHY GALLO/GETTY IMAGES/WIRESTOCK

view them less as mindless killers and more as an integral part of an ecosystem – so they're worth protecting. If people criticise my support of sharks, they usually speak from a place of fear, which I try to combat with knowledge, information and patience. I explain sharks' behaviour, that they're an apex predator and how we can avoid negative interactions with them.

Tiger sharks' decreasing population has led the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to list them as near-threatened. They typically live in warmer waters, where humans like to be in boats and fish and so on. Shark nets on the KwaZulu-Natal coast endanger their wellbeing. And since they have a low reproduction rate, overfishing harms their population too. We impact their space a lot.

We know that people are more inclined to protect something they've experienced first-hand that positively impacts them. Much of my work, the trips I offer and teaching people free diving with big animals, is around creating that connection and encouraging understanding and appreciation for these creatures. That behaviour change can have a more positive impact.

If you want to swim with big animals, whether tiger sharks, whale sharks, whales or dolphins, be sure to do so responsibly by choosing operators that work with local scientists to do this with the least impact. I wouldn't say the conservation of tiger sharks depends on people experiencing them – not everyone has the skills or desire to dive with them – but that doesn't mean you can't respect and admire them. ●

5 Fast Facts

Female tiger sharks are the larger sex. They often grow larger than 3.7m, whereas males seldom get that large.

Their distinguishing features include teeth with razor-sharp serrations whose tips point unmistakably sideward, and their skin is blue to light-green with a white or light-yellow underbelly.

Tiger sharks live in tropical and subtropical waters throughout the world.

They have a reputation for eating pretty much anything and are an apex predator.

Killer whales sometimes prey upon tiger sharks. But their slow, stealthy swimming and camouflaging colours make them difficult for predators to detect. They're also strong swimmers that are able to sprint away to avoid being caught due to their long upper tail.

BELOW Close... but not touching. Hanli avoids unnecessary touching of marine life, including sharks.

PHOTOGRAPHY JEAN-MARIE GHISLAIN

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Densen Magaisa cranks onto the first segment of the Helskloof descent, with the Richtersveld mountain desert going ballistic in the background.

DUST, SWEAT AND GEARS

FORGOTTEN DORPS. OFF-GRID WILDERNESS PARKS. GRAVEL PASSES IN THE BACK OF BEYOND. AND A WHOLE BUNCH OF SWEET SINGLETRACK ... GET READY TO ADD SOME KICK-ASS ADVENTURE TO YOUR NEXT MOUNTAIN BIKING EXPERIENCE WITH THESE TOP (SECRET) MTB TRAILS

Words & Photos **Jacques Marais**

When it comes to mountain biking, the trails less travelled often deliver the sweetest rides. Think of them as the B-sides to bucket list routes other riders post on Instagram but have never had the pleasure (or guts) to experience.

Let's get a few things straight before you saddle up, though. These trails you're about to mind ride may be off the grid and less than perfectly groomed, and, chances are, you'll have to cope with snakes, thorns and the occasional wild beastie. But then, you're not a scaredy-cat, are you?

That's a good thing because I'm going to dump you right at the deep end, starting with a delirious arid adventure in the Richtersveld mountain desert. Delirious because it's night-time, with a low-hanging full moon casting psychedelic shadows, and this will no doubt switch your mind into hallucinogenic mode.

Imagine yourself at the apex of Helskloof Pass, surrounded by gnarled botterboom and *Aloe pearsonii*, starkly silhouetted in the lunar half-light. In the distance, a giant eagle owl booms out resonant hoots, with the Southern Cross aglitter above the soaring Kodaspiek summit.

A Tim Burtonesque landscape unfolds alongside the downhill route, with spiky Euphorbias and gnarled kokerboom clawing at the sky. It makes for a surreal botanical realm, and you can't help sensing the scuttle of the Parabuthus scorpions, trapdoor spiders and flint-eyed adders that populate this ancient and extraterrestrial desert.

Release the brakes and feel the tug of gravity as you roll into the skittish descent. The trail is pitched somewhere between a Super Mario Bros video game and the Dakar Rally race, brimming with a combo of gritty gravel road and singletrack sections.

Here and there, humping kickers give just enough air to make your bum hum, while lazy sidewinder curves add just enough drift to let your rear wheel spray grit and dust. It's all angular rock and volcanic gnarl as you blast the 4km onto the shapeshifting plains down below. And relax, and breathe…

There's bad news, unfortunately. The Desert Knights MTB Tour used to be one of my fave stage races, with six days of MTB meditation via the /Ai-/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park in those border lands where Namibia and South Africa meet, but then Covid happened.

Don't despair, though: the trails are still there, so nothing is stopping you from pedalling those routes solo or with a group of friends. You could even go the guided route with an adventure operator like Richtersveld Tours (***richtersveldtours.com***).

All I can say is, if life gets any better than this, I'll sommer die, my china.

—

Augrabies Falls National Park is another Northern Cape park with extraterrestrial MTB and gravel-biking options.

BELOW LEFT Few people realise how many singletrack and game footpaths meander through the arid /Ai-/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park.

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Trip Planner

GETTING THERE

Follow the N7 from Springbok and turn left to Steinkopf (51km), then continue to Port Nolloth (108km) and Alexander Bay (85km). From there, the road turns to gravel, and the final 92km to Sendelingsdrif will take at least two hours; allow two to three hours more to get to De Hoop (45km) or Richtersberg (54km) – note that access to the park is limited to 4×4 vehicles.

Sendelingsdrif: GPS co-ordinates: S28° 07' 25.7" E16° 53' 31.8"
Distance: 369km
Duration: Six to eight hours
Fuel Stops: Port Nolloth and Sendelingsdrif (fill up at both)

Stay Here

Personally, I think a trip to the Richtersveld should include mandatory camping, and I rate De Hoop as one of my favourite campsites on Earth. Big-ass mountains at your back, a river at your feet, and with the geographic drama of Namibia skylining on the far horizon. Good ablution facilities make the R275 to R338 per site per night great value. *sanparks.org*

GARIEP DAM NATURE RESERVE (FREE STATE)

Why Ride It?
This is as close to the centre of South Africa as you'll get, and secondly, you can crank amid a profusion of wildlife upon plains resembling a mini-Serengeti. Leave the reserve's gravel roads to explore the game tracks and footpaths, especially along the shoreline of this vast lake.

Distance
Explore more than 70km of riding within the nature reserve, mostly along gravel roads and dual-track routes.

Route Info
Enter the reserve gate, then head into the game-viewing area to follow the game drive loop (don't miss the detour to the magnificent viewpoint above the dam). The ride along the plains is fast and rambunctious, following dual track bisecting lush grassland plains, brimming with racing herds of blesbok, zebra, wildebeest, eland and springbok. Extend your ride by following the gravel track doglegging towards the tarmac highway, or loop along the water's edge for a bit of a bump and grind.

Maps and Signage
A map is available from Forever Resorts.

Grading
Any free-ranging rider with a sense of adventure and moderate MTB skills will love this route. Best of all is that it won't blow your budget.

Access
Ride free of charge with a permit, available from Forever Resorts reception. *foreversa.co.za*

—
The author clatters along one of the dual tracks descending towards the café latte waters of the Gariep Dam.

ABOVE Richtersveld boasts both wilderness and regular campsites along the green, life-giving artery of the Orange River.

Matthew Drew gazes out across the impressive 'Restaurant at the End of the Universe'.

BELOW Kath Millar smashing some Tranquilitas singletrack, built by master trailscaper Glenn Harrison.

TRANQUILITAS ADVENTURE FARM, EMGWENYA (MPUMALANGA)

Why Ride It?
When it comes to trails in SA, you can bet good money you'll have a blast if Glenn Harrison was the builder. His routes on Tranquilitas won't disappoint, with a rollicking combo of purpose-built singletrack, rocky enduro segments and jeep track to suit every level of rider. Expect super-tight, fast-flowing sections, especially through the Zorro swerves in the forest, with occasional breathers to enjoy the viewpoints and historical landmarks.

Distance
Various interconnected loops from 3km to 36km, with the total ride clocking in at over 80km (including the mountain traverse).

Route Info
Crank off from the Tranquilitas campsite (get your permit here) or lodge and follow the clear signage. The various loops connect seamlessly, but be warned, there'll be a fair bit of climbing; the ascents are smooth and follow the contours, though, so the elevation gain is quick and achievable. Don't miss out on old faves like Big Dipper and Forest Loop, or mind-bending fun along the newer Candy Store and Long-Drop.

Maps and Signage
Maps and GPS tracks can be downloaded from the website.

Grading
Most of the trails are pitched at intermediate-level riders, but the Mountain Loop and Traverse Trails are for fit, expert-level riders.

Access
Day permits will set you back R60, a two-day permit R90, and week permit R160.
tranquilitas.com

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#3 VAN GAALEN

10 June
Van Gaalen Cheese Farm, GP

- 10KM - R200 - Fun Ride
- 20KM - R250 - Fun Race
- 40KM - R350 - Half Marathon
- 70KM - R420 - Marathon
- 40KM - R350 - E-Bikes

#4 SONDELA

01 July
Sondela Nature Reserve, LP

- 10KM - R200 - Fun Ride
- 20KM - R250 - Fun Race
- 40KM - R350 - Half Marathon
- 70KM - R420 - Marathon
- 40KM - R350 - E-Bikes

#5 PRIME VIEW

29 July
Prime View, Midrand, GP

- 10KM - R200 - Fun Ride
- 20KM - R250 - Fun Race
- 40KM - R350 - Half Marathon
- 70KM - R420 - Marathon
- 40KM - R350 - E-Bikes

#6 WELLINGTON

09 Sept
Wellington, WC

- 10KM - R200 - Fun Ride
- 20KM - R250 - Fun Race
- 40KM - R350 - Half Marathon
- 70KM - R420 - Marathon
- 40KM - R350 - E-Bikes

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The name **'MAGOEBASKLOOF'** has such a **MYTHICAL RING** to it that you can't help but **EXPECT** a solid dose of **FOREST MAGIC**

—
Zane Schmahl styling on his gravel steel frame along one of Magoebaskloof's foresty berms.

MAGOEBASKLOOF MTB TRAILS, WOLKBERG (LIMPOPO)

Why Ride It?
The name 'Magoebaskloof' has such a mythical ring to it that you can't help but expect an intoxicating dose of forest magic should you head into these woods. Hidden tracks and gravel passes meander from Haenertsburg village into a rural mountain paradise dotted with cheese dairies, South Africa's northern-most craft beer brewery, fruit orchards, the Cheerio Gardens and many a trout stream – an ultimate space in which to reconnect with nature.

Distance
Tourism Magoebaskloof Association (TMA) routes link the area's main attractions, all while allowing you a cracking MTB experience along nearly 60km of trails.

Route Info
The 'Yellow Route' is the best maintained of the three main routes and promises a challenging ride but with the reward of an ice-cold lager at Zwakala Brewery (who could say no to that!). Start from Zwakala, expect an exhilarating mix of climbing and flowing downhills on district roads and singletrack tripping via Stanford Lake College XCO track, Wegraakbosch organic farm and Cheerio Gardens. Finally, suffer back up the zigzag switchbacks to Zwakala River Retreat and Brewery.

Maps and Signage
Maps are available with your permits and on the website.

Grading
The trails are intermediate level, but so well designed that any rider from beginner to expert will have a blast.

Access
Permits from Cheerio Trout Lodge and Magoebaskloof Adventures cost R50 per day and kids under 12 ride free.
magoebaskloooftourism.co.za

Simone Sharpe suffused by the magic of a De Hoop Nature Reserve dawn.

The ***HUSH:*** *some places* ***HAVE IT,*** *others, not so much.* ***DE HOOP IS*** *the former*

DE HOOP NATURE RESERVE, OVERSTRAND (WESTERN CAPE)

Why Ride It?

The Hush: some places have it, others not so much. De Hoop is in the former category, and is a wilderness space where tranquillity is sure to find you. At an impressive 34 000ha, it rates as one of CapeNature's most extensive conservation areas, combining pristine coastal fynbos and renosterveld with a protected offshore marine reserve. And on the Whale Trail, you have an excellent chance of spotting whales on foot and off the bike.

Distance

Recently, De Hoop has become a favourite among mountain bikers who flock there to pedal the purpose-built De Hoop Vlei Experience Route, totalling 55km.

Route Info

Technical singletrack with natural obstacles and diverse terrain has gone a long way to entice experienced riders to De Hoop. This new track ascends the Flat Rock section to the north of the vlei all the way up to Buchu Camp; you'll no doubt feel the burn in your legs, but this will fade away as you bliss out on jaw-dropping views across the vlei. Numerous new routes are under construction.

Maps and Signage

Printed maps are available from reception. GPS tracks are on the website.

Grading

The reserve roads and plains trails are perfect for family outings, while intermediate riders will love the ridge line routes.

Access

Entry into De Hoop Reserve will cost you R50 at the main gate. ■

BEAST

Mud, sweat and gears: Ford's next-generation Rangers are made to handle beastly terrain.

MODE

RURAL ROADS IN NEED OF REPAIR, TOUGH MOUNTAIN PASSES, STRETCHES OF DIRT PITTED WITH DONGAS… THERE WERE SLOW-GOING SECTIONS OF NOTHING BUT ROCKS, SCARY DROP-OFF CLIFFS ON A RAINY NIGHT, AND EVEN SOME SECTIONS OF STRAIGHT, FLAT TAR. ON A ROAD TRIP ACROSS MZANSI'S HEARTLAND, **KEITH BAIN** DISCOVERS THE JOY OF BEING BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A HARDY, HARD-WEARING, HIGH-TECH BAKKIE

Photos **Jeff Latham, Chris Wall and Keith Bain**

RIGHT Mzansi's largest dam was initially named after apartheid tyrant Hendrik Verwoerd. It was rechristened Gariep (Khoekhoe for 'river' or 'big water') in 1996.

BELOW Between battles with donga-bedevilled gravel roads, the Ford Ranger convoy was placated by the country's customary long-wait roadworks.

On road trips, anything can happen. Often weird and pretty out-there things, too.

Like when you find yourself at one of those generic-looking petrol stations somewhere between Joburg and Bloemfontein sipping a tepid Wimpy Americano while your co-driver, who happens to be a Cape Town coffee evangelist who has trained world-champion baristas and carries his own brand of ground beans in his luggage, watches in disgust, despairing eyebrow raised.

I was surrounded by a bunch of motoring hacks and a fleet of fresh-off-the-production-line next-generation Ford Rangers. Almost everyone in our convoy was swigging similarly lacklustre lattes and frightful flat whites – never mind the oily chips and burgers and soggy toasted sarmies being wolfed down.

We were on a mission, though, coffee quality a lesser priority than making time. We weren't so much seeking out the sights and sounds of the Free State as we were getting our loaded bakkies to some hard-to-reach destinations. On the backs of our vehicles were JoJo tanks, a few fruit trees and assorted heavy-duty equipment – all bound for rural parts.

Getting there was the tough bit, our Ford Rangers the solution.

Once we left the N1, we would intentionally navigate towards a few appalling dirt roads, engage beast mode as we put those bakkies through their paces on a through-the-rural-heartland adventure that would traverse not only pretty countryside, but seek out some of the scariest mountain roads we could get our tyres onto.

Our journey was timed to reach our first stop – the little settlement at the edge of the Gariep Dam – in time for sunset. Roughly midway between Joburg and Cape Town, some 180km from Bloemfontein, at the southern edge of the Free State, on the border with the Eastern Cape, the country's largest dam is surrounded by endless wide-open space, nature reserves and receding hills.

Come December, the settlement's full-time population of around 2 000 souls swells fivefold and transforms into a family-centric holiday-vibe jol when all available accommodations and camping spots are taken, and when the flat-bottom tourist boat sets off several times per day, laden with visitors.

We were there midweek in March, though, so the highlight of our time was at the bar of our hotel, which occupied a ridge high above the dam.

It's a moody land, sometimes drought-ravaged, but not on this occasion: from the hotel, the water shimmered like spilled mercury, numerous yachts and other craft floating on its gleaming flat surface, strung with islands, the outlines of distant koppies silhouetted against the far horizon.

It's a ***MOODY LAND,*** *sometimes drought-ravaged, but not on this occasion: from the hotel, the* ***WATER*** *shimmered like* ***SPILLED MERCURY***

Sunrise observed from the De Stijl Gariep Hotel: the sky above the Gariep Dam turns to lava, silhouetting islands and distant hills.

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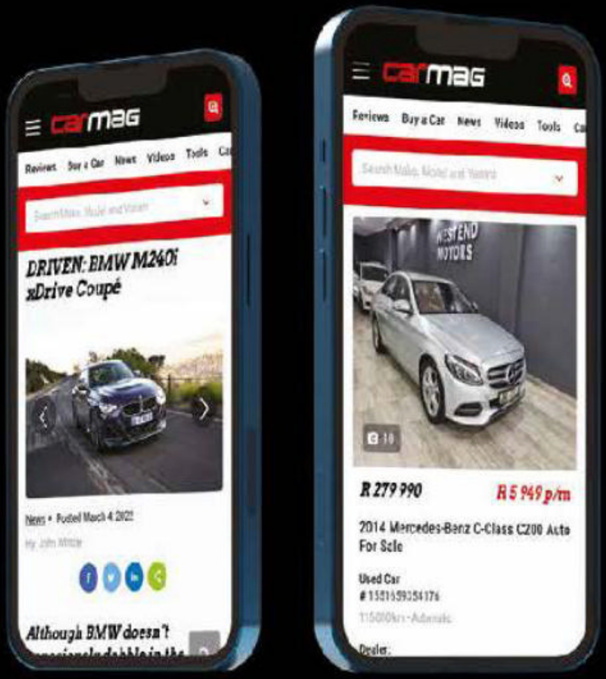
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Next morning, a brilliant sunrise turned the sky into a hallucination of orange, pink and violet striations that rose off the dam, itself transformed into molten lava.

It's not just a pretty place, though. The dam produces hydroelectric power and is a lifeline capable of holding 5.5 billion cubic metres of water – when full, it covers 360 square kilometres, with 435km of shoreline. The dam's level fluctuates wildly, of course, but the spectacle of the engineering project that keeps that water in place is ceaselessly fascinating: its wall, 88m tall, is almost 1km long.

We did a quick drive-by of the wall as we set off, heading south across rural farmland regions and passing lonely hamlets and villages in unheard of places. Our route was a mix of potholed tarmac and the occasional stop-start congestion of poorly planned towns. We passed obscure turn-offs to anonymous farms where dirt roads disappeared into distant hills and mountains, through the plains and around grassy bends.

At some point, we were in Molteno, where Ouma Rusks were invented. It's an old settlers' town, these days slightly dispirited, but not without charm. It's also close to Buffelsfontein, where – on 28 June 1996 – the mercury plunged to -18.6°C, the country's coldest-ever recorded temperature.

With everyone in need of caffeine, a loo, or both, we stopped at a quaint café with a garden out back and craft items on its shelves. While we waited for them to fire up the coffee machine, we trooped through the adjoining bookshop with its lavishly curated selection of pre-owned books, all in fine nick and selling at excellent prices; the owner, a writer born in Molteno, runs a feeding scheme for the town's hungry, homeless

ABOVE The convoy followed gravel roads through the rural heartland of the Eastern Cape, a region of incredible beauty.

BELOW Free-ranging livestock and remote villages were the reward for following roads less travelled.

ABOVE The Ford Ranger Wildtrak poses outside The Littlest Bookshop in Molteno.

TOP In these remote parts of the Eastern Cape, horses roamed free, with not a cowboy – nor any human – visible for kilometres.

BELOW Drizzle and then rain attended the quick outdoor ceremony in Tsitsikamma village, where the chief received JoJo tanks offloaded from the backs of the Rangers.

dogs who help themselves from the large bowl on the porch – plus, lounging on the shop's sofa, there was a big-eyed bookstore dog who welcomed us inside with her pert ears and appraising snout.

Book tour done, we were back on the road, dodging potholes, gawping at the surrounding landscapes – riveting by anyone's standards – as we made our way into Komani, aka Queenstown, where we paused just long enough to slip a couple of dozen Spur burgers down our throats before disappearing again, back into an astonishing landscape.

The Eastern Cape's rural interior was full of emptiness and wonder, the enfolding countryside dotted with cows, upside-down cars and rusted wind pumps, the serrated lines of hills and painterly blue mountains streaking across the horizon; a broad expansive terrain in a distinctive shade of olive green, all splendidly laid out below vast skies that grew heavier and lower with clouds as we swished around the bendy country roads that led, eventually, to the remote rural village of Tsitsikamma. It was a place enfolded by bucolic beauty, somewhere that seemed forgotten by time.

By the time we parked on a grass verge overlooking a ravine that seemed to cut the sprawling rural village in two parts, it was drizzling.

In the rain, we unloaded the JoJo tanks that were to be installed as an emergency water resource as part of a Gift of the Givers project, and as the village chief thanked us and bade us goodbye, he shook his head and warned us that although our hotel was just 40-odd kilometres away, it'd be a treacherous trip.

'I'm not sure about that road,' he said, giving us a fearful look that suggested you'd need to be a few bricks short of a load to attempt driving any further.

Then again, we were driving beasts built precisely for that sort of challenge.

The chief wasn't wrong about the state of the road, though. We left faraway, lost-in-the-sky Tsitsikamma in the middle of the afternoon and arrived on the other side of the Katberg Pass seven hours later.

At first it wasn't too challenging. As we leopard-crawled out of the village, watched by goats in the paddock around the decaying skeleton of an old church, the road cut through an undulating, shimmering green meadow. Cows mooed, horses frolicked, the scenes through the car windows were idyllic even as the road turned to mud.

Occasionally we'd pass an abandoned farmhouse or a miniature lake alongside rows of tall, gracious trees, or overgrown gardens next to derelict cottages and left-to-rot barns.

At one point, we were up on a ridge, our merry convoy waiting for photographers trailing far behind us; while we waited, we stood in awe as we took in the

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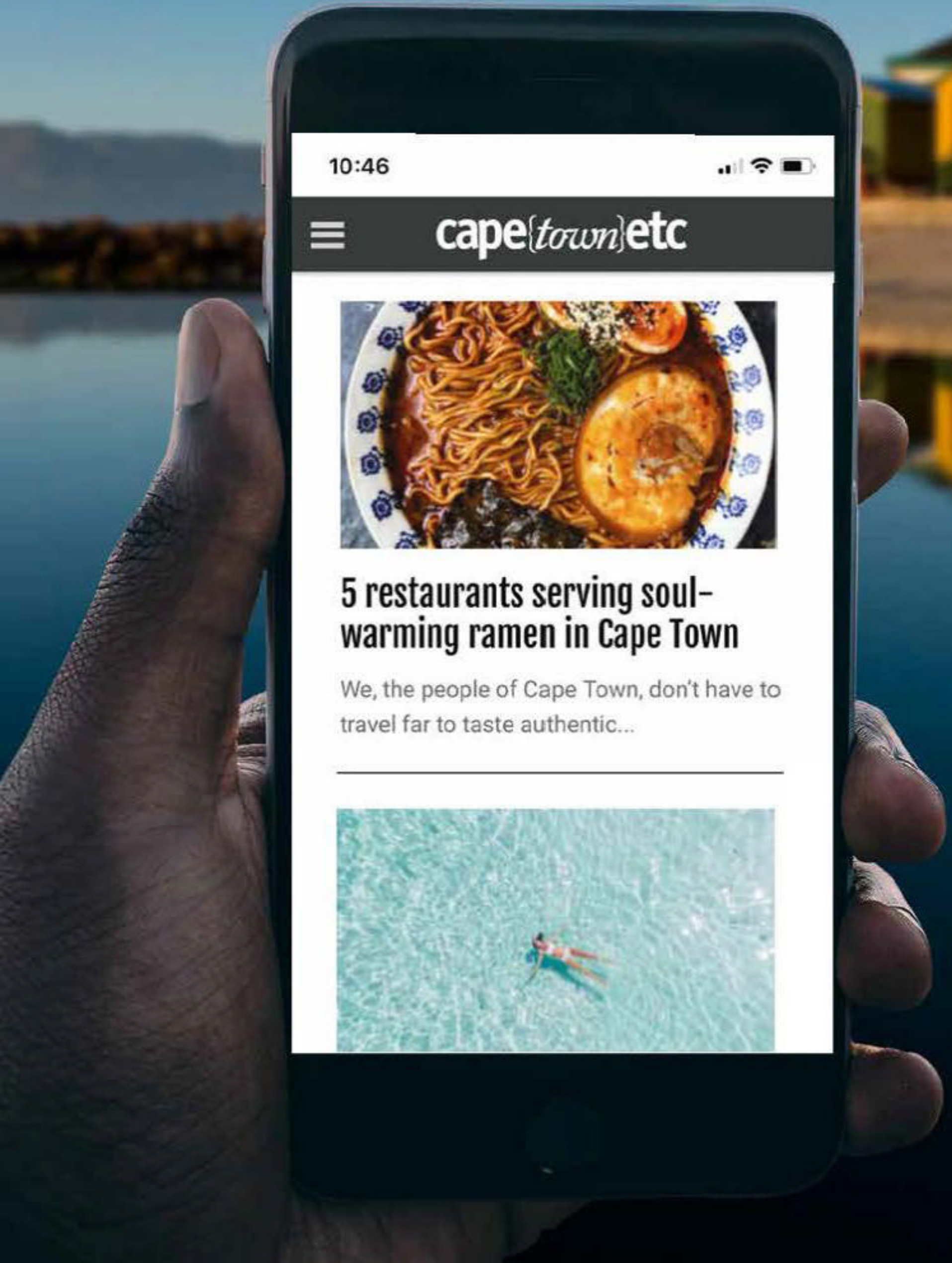
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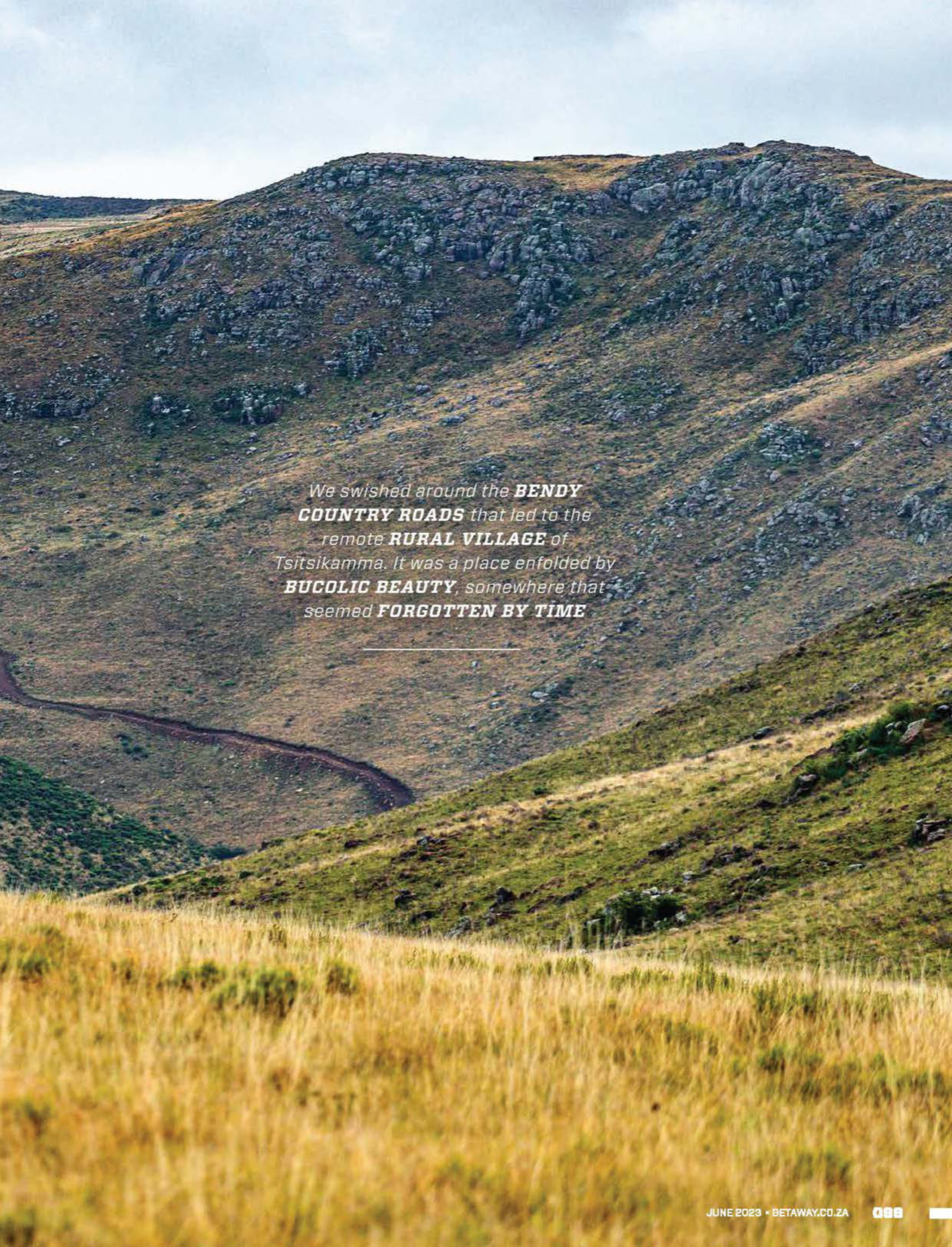
In the upper reaches of the Katberg range, beauteous views of the enfolding mountains failed to hint at the troublesome sections of barely-there road still to come.



We swished around the ***BENDY COUNTRY ROADS*** *that led to the remote* ***RURAL VILLAGE*** *of Tsitsikamma. It was a place enfolded by* ***BUCOLIC BEAUTY****, somewhere that seemed* ***FORGOTTEN BY TIME***

RIGHT The convoy pauses for pees and photos.

BELOW Mudslides and washed away roads were increasingly the norm as the convoy settled into more challenging driving conditions – the Ford Rangers took the thrills and spills in their stride, though.

soft-cushioned grassy plains that unfurled for kilometres in the direction of distant, towering mountains. There was a whole universe up there, as majestic and timeless as anything out of *The Lord of the Rings*, lush pastures, vast skies, abundant tranquillity marked by an absence of people.

But a few kilometres on, we discovered what the chief had warned us about. Suddenly, we were traversing massive holes, lethal obstacles in the path, sections of collapsed road, stretches of track that were nothing but strewn boulders.

For several tense hours, we gripped our steering wheels tight as we prayed our way around tight bends, inched over fearsome rocks and squeezed through hair's breadth sections of track where a recent deluge had mostly washed the road away, leaving nothing but a deadly drop-off and just enough space for those Rangers to tiptoe through.

On the other side of the rough pass, we arrived – as though we were aliens touching down on another planet – at the perfectly serene, utterly genteel Katberg Mountain Resort, an unexpectedly old-fashioned hotel with shades of David Lynch and an exquisite setting. After our wild ride, the lush gardens and orderly network of pathways to our bedrooms came as a shock.

THE BEAST

Next-Gen Ford Ranger

One shouldn't use labels, but the Next-Gen Ford Ranger, being built in South Africa since last November, really is a beast. 'Bigger, Tougher, Smarter'. That's how they're selling it, and they've nailed it.

It's a series of beasts, actually, seeing as there are multiple iterations, from a manual bakkie with incredible handling, all the way up to a top-end 3-litre V6 turbodiesel-powered Wildtrak (R953 500), which comes in a sporty shade of metallic orange and is a well-orchestrated blend of comfort, style and engineering – a handsome (if thirsty) workhorse that's fun to drive, makes you feel safe, and is steeped in high-tech road-taming enhancements and an array of synched technologies.

Their size is the first thing you notice. They're huge machines – apart from lots of room in the back, they are wide, with a voluminous cabin, leg room galore. Plus, nifty interiors with smart, dark-finish trimmings (Wildtrak comes with partial leather electric seats and ambient lighting), a coast-to-coast dashboard, and the super-large digital touchscreen down the central console.

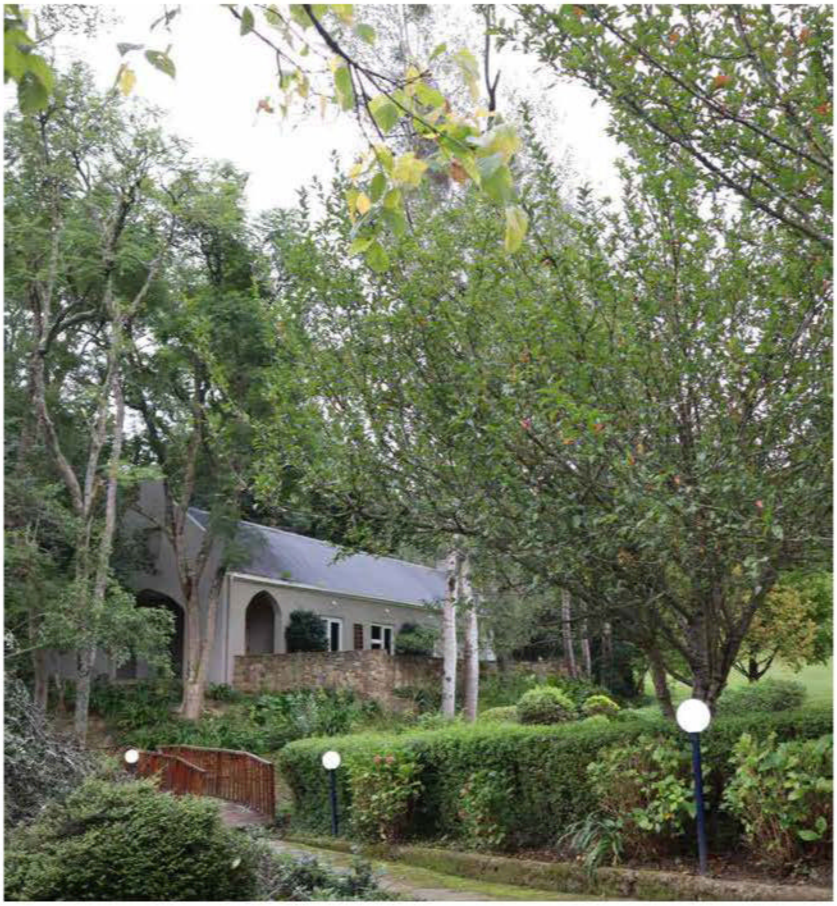
Plus, it can pull and carry substantial loads – you can tow a 3 500kg trailer, pop a pallet or a JoJo tank on the back.

Handsome exterior, too. With its front face black grille and halogen daytime running lamps, durable 16-inch steel wheels, it just about winks at you as if to say, 'I got this'.

And it certainly does: it grips, it moves, it gets over and through – it does what a bakkie's meant to do.

With some 25 variations to pick from, most eyes will probably be on the XLT (from R592 700 for the 2-litre 4x2 double cab) which, like all the models, is not only sophisticated, but as reliable on tar as it is on dirt.

ford.co.za



The manager, who awaited our late arrival in what appeared to be his pyjamas, told me that the hotel – built in the 1940s – was originally a sort of insane asylum. At the same time, it was a sanatorium for TB patients who were sent to the mountains to breathe clean air. The creaky, cranky sounds, he said, might be attributable to ghosts, although I assumed it was the rickety, ancient plumbing.

In the morning, there was proper coffee, and then a short, scenic drive to the small town of Alice, which sits on the bank of the Tyume River and was first settled by the Brits in 1824 and eventually named after one of Queen Victoria's daughters. More recently, the town has produced singer-songwriter (and actor and novelist) Nakhane, whose internationally acclaimed voice, some say, must be attributable to having grown up in such a beautiful environment.

We got an earful of Alice's musical exuberance at the school we visited, where we were welcomed with undue reverence and joyful singing by the entire student body who were waiting for us to drop off the last of our JoJo tanks along with the fruit trees that had

LEFT Katberg Mountain Resort is set within sprawling, verdant gardens.

BELOW From Katberg Mountain Resort, there are options for hikes and MTB rides on the slopes of the eponymous mountain range.

Moving Animals

'The craziest place a Ranger has taken me is over the Naude's Neck Pass (R396),' says Lynda du Plessis, who manages the philanthropic Ford Wildlife Foundation (FWF), established by Ford Southern Africa in 2014. 'It's a gravel road between Rhodes and Maclear, now called Nqanqarhu. At the highest point the road is over 2 500m above sea level, basically a single track.' Lynda says the Ranger is the hero of every project supported by the FWF – currently there are 27 across South Africa, all requiring reliable vehicles to reach remote locations via challenging terrain. 'For our carnivore and black rhino range-expansion programmes, the Ranger enables endangered species such as cheetah, wild dog and black rhino to be relocated to reserves where these species used to be found naturally, increasing the gene pool. They travel vast distances, often across borders with a cheetah or wild dog on the back so they can reach their destinations speedily.'

wildlife@ford.com

Interconnected

'If we didn't have our Ford Wildlife Foundation-sponsored Ranger, we'd battle to execute our projects,' says Mawanda Mbola, project manager for Wessa (the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa) in the Eastern Cape, where he oversees all of the NGO's school projects, a job that involves visiting difficult-to-reach deep rural areas, often via treacherous gravel roads. 'We use the Ranger to transport project materials to schools – soil, compost, plants, JoJo tanks and other heavy materials. It's so comfortable on the roads as well; there are long, often arduous drives, but this bakkie is a lifesaver, comfortable and it works really hard for us.' The slog is worthwhile, though, Mawanda says, since Wessa's work cultivates lifelong change. 'We get great feedback; people tell us that we've helped foster a reconnection between people and nature – that our work has enabled them to recognise the value of protecting and preserving their natural environment.

wessa.org.za

We love you Abla
Thanks Ford & Wessa julle baie

ABOVE Children in Alice prepare to sing their welcomes as trees are offloaded at their school where it's hoped the trees' branches and fruit will attract rare Cape parrots.

BELOW High on the Katberg plateau, the convoy slowed as the night took on an eerie glow. Adjacent to Katberg Mountain Resort, self-catering houses are available on the golf estate.

survived the journey from Joburg on the back of our Rangers.

The trees were to be planted as part of a project to attract the region's endangered Cape parrots, of which there are just 1 800 remaining – the children had been learning about them, held aloft drawings of them as they sang, all part of a drive to foster their deeper connection with nature and wildlife.

Having been sung to and waved at, we returned to the road for a final few hours – sadly, tar all the way. For that last leg, we were in the Ranger's top-tier 3-litre V6 Wildtrak iteration, so-called, I presume, because of how effortlessly it tames even the wildest of roads.

That highway was perhaps not the best test of its abilities, though it meant our jaunt to the finish in Gqeberha felt sort of fancy, with such enhancements as adaptive cruise control and cameras that gave us a bird's-eye view of the vehicle. It was the sort of ride that makes you grateful to be alive at a time when – in two quick days – you can take in such a vast swath of the country, see places few people have ever been, and traverse stretches of beastly terrain in a machine that makes you feel invincible. ■

Check In

If you're cutting across the country and looking for a couple of unusual, under-hyped places to stay, these are the spots our road trip took us to.

MIDDELWATER FARM HOTEL

On their farm outside Bloemfontein, on the road to Brandfort, an enterprising couple has established Be Human, a project incorporating this handsome three-room hotel, a restaurant, bar, wedding venue, and range of family-friendly activities, including a Saturday market and deli, quad-bike rides, and a waterslide and jumping castle for kids. There's also a slick little backpackers', with one en-suite room, eight two-sleeper containers with access to shared bathrooms and a communal kitchen, and a dorm with eight beds. It's a tranquil and satisfying alternative to the city, with a gracious countryside atmosphere, great food, and farm animals.

From R725 pps pn in the hotel, including breakfast; R198 pps pn in an en-suite room in the backpackers'

082 282 3463,
be-human.co.za

DE STIJL GARIEP HOTEL

While the hotel is a rather soulless modern block, incongruous and cookie-cutter in design, its location overlooking the Gariep Dam (and the most extraordinary sunrises) is a real stunner. It's vital to reserve a room (with a balcony) facing the dam – there will be times when you gaze down at the water and imagine you are looking at a pocket of Indonesia, with its glittering islands sprinkled across a golden sea. The hotel, while serviceable, has large, bland contemporary rooms (43 of them), and while service is up and down you do run into friendly souls – especially behind the bar and working the restaurant at dinnertime (the menu is decent enough, if unimaginative, but the execution is peculiar).

From R550 pps pn (winter promotion through 31 August 2023)

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KATBERG MOUNTAIN RESORT & HOTEL

A lofty location, high up in the Winterberg, means there's an abundance of pure, fresh air here – the real scent of escape from the modern world. A rambling old-fashioned resort-style hotel, its clusters of rooms – 26 in all – are set among sprawling, verdant gardens – pathways lead to tennis courts and bowling greens, hikes and trails, a pool and play areas for children, plus down into tree-shaded nooks and up to the main building, where there are lounges and dining areas and a bar. Despite the next- door golf estate, there's nature all around, and a tremor of history, too – originally a psychiatric ward and sanatorium, the resort may possess a few lingering ghosts.

From R900 pps pn including breakfast or R1 050 pps pn including dinner and breakfast; from R2 500 pn in a self-catering house (up to 8 guests)

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Hundreds of southern right whales migrate to the warmer, sheltered waters of De Hoop each winter to calve after spending the summer feeding in Antarctic waters.

In the land of GIANTS

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Words **Elise Kirsten**

ABOVE Cape mountain zebra faced extinction at the beginning of the 20th century. However, reserves like De Hoop have played a crucial role in protecting the species, which has made a remarkable recovery.

Skittish Cape zebra gave way as I drove slowly along the gravel road to my home for the next few nights, while scatterings of bontebok grazed unperturbed on a large patch of grass nearby. I was staying in one of De Hoop Collection's plush Cloete Suites, in the historical homestead section on the reserve. I was briefly tempted to flop onto the four-poster bed to read after unpacking my things, but the outdoors beckoned.

The reserve – a World Heritage Site, positioned at the southernmost tip of Africa, along the Agulhas Bank – isn't only known for its birdlife and coastal fynbos, but for the protected ocean playground that draws southern right whales to mate and calve each year. I strolled to reception to enquire about where the best spots are to look out for these large cetaceans and was greeted warmly by Dalfrenzo Laing, the assistant general manager.

A former head guide at De Hoop, Dalfrenzo has an intimate knowledge of his 36 000ha backyard and its coastline. 'Whales are easiest to spot on sunny, cloudless days and you have the best chance of seeing them in the middle of the day when the sun is high in the sky. A good time to look out for them is between 10am and 12pm when they become active.'

> *'Whales are **EASIEST TO** spot on sunny, cloudless days and you have the **BEST CHANCE** of seeing them in the **MIDDLE** of the day when the sun is high in the sky'*

It was already late afternoon and although my chances of seeing whales were diminished, I was keen to venture down to the ocean. Dalfrenzo directed me to the viewpoint at Koppie Alleen, about 15km from the reception area, and explained how on sunny days, the incredibly white sand in the bay reflects blue light giving the water a turquoise hue. 'This makes the whales' dark bodies easier to spot.'

Before I left, I was encouraged to book a guided interpretive marine walk the next morning. This popular activity is an excellent way to not only look out for whales but learn about the intertidal ecosystem. 'The marine walk is special. You can see anything from octopus to starfish, sea urchins, anemones and small crustaceans such as crabs and hermit crabs. It's a highlight of a visit to De Hoop,' said Dalfrenzo.

I drove slowly towards the ocean and shortly after turning onto the final stretch of gravel, a herd of common eland emerged from the thicket to cross the road. These are among the world's largest antelope. A male with magnificent stature and eyes the colour

LEFT A footpath leads to the water's edge where the daily marine interpretive walk takes place.

BELOW The dunes at Koppie Alleen provide an elevated viewpoint from which to look for whales.

of volcanic soil stopped briefly and held my gaze. He dropped his head, nibbled at the grass and then moved deeper into the bush, followed by the rest of the herd. Their dusky coats blended with their surroundings and soon they were enveloped by the grey bush.

When I reached Koppie Alleen, I took off my shoes and headed down a sandy path lined with succulents. Instead of going to the rock pools, I began climbing the dunes. Pleasantly warm sand filtered between my toes, and as I reached the high point, I breathed in salty air.

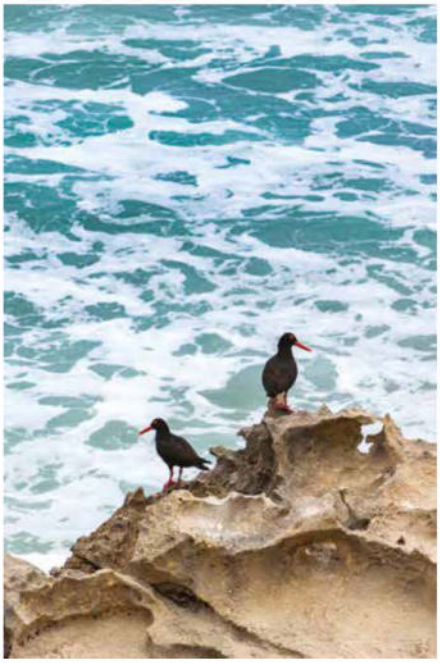
The view was intoxicating. I watched the ocean's surface keenly for a breaching body or a puff of spray above the water. Sadly, these whales were almost entirely wiped out by the whaling industry in the previous century and while the population has recovered to about 20% of the pre-exploitation levels, there seem to be new challenges facing these giants of the sea.

Dr Els Vermeulen, research manager at the Whale Unit, at the University of Pretoria's Mammal Research Institute, whose team has been actively studying southern right whale activity around De Hoop and Hermanus, shared some of her concerns with me.

Tips for Whale Watching in De Hoop

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Visit during whale season, from June to November, with peak whale-spotting season being in late August and September. The longer you stay at De Hoop, the better your chances of seeing them.
- Bring a decent pair of binoculars. The bay is large, and whales don't always come as close to shore as you'd like them to.
- Join an interpretive marine walk. These are interesting and informative and if you spot a whale, your guide will tell you more about them. (Although southern right whales are the most frequently spotted, humpbacks can sometimes be seen, as well as the less common Bryde's whale).
- Visit Koppie Alleen from 10am to 12pm when the sun is high in the sky.
- Book a spot on the Whale Trail hike. This five-night hiking trail will give you lots of exposure to the coastline on the last three days and takes you to vantage points along the cliffside that aren't accessible by vehicle. There's also the fully catered and guided three-night De Hoop Vlei to Whale Trail, where guests stay at De Hoop Collection's brand-new De Mond Villa. Or spend five nights on the De Hoop Camino Luxury Coastal Walking Trail, which takes hikers along the coast to either De Mond Villa or Melkkamer Manor House and to Lekkerwater Beach Lodge.



ABOVE All of De Hoop's 70km-long coastline is a marine protected area (MPA), which reaches three nautical miles (about five kilometres) into the ocean, making it one of Africa's largest.

LEFT Black oystercatchers search for food, like mussels, crustaceans and limpets, found in rocky intertidal zones.

'The females usually calve every three years and now we're noticing that they're only calving every four to five years. There is also a 23% reduction in the body mass of lactating females. This is significant. We think it may have something to do with the whales travelling further than previously thought to find food. If calving intervals continue to increase and the growth rate drops, the population will stagnate or even decline. This is problematic and we believe it all relates to climate change.'

Dr Vermeulen's team tagged 11 southern rights with satellite trackers in October last year to gather data on the whales' migration routes and foraging grounds. 'We plan to tag more this year and again next year,' said Dr Vermeulen.

Last year, a total of 608 southern right whales were photographed during the Whale Unit's annual aerial survey, which takes place along the coast from Nature's Valley to Muizenberg. The count was higher than the preceding two years and although numbers have been declining since about 2016, southern rights continue to visit South Africa's shoreline (specifically Hermanus and De Hoop) to calve each year. De Hoop remains one of the best land-based whale-watching areas on Earth.

My thoughts returned to the ocean as I scanned the water a final time before heading back. That evening at dinner, I overheard a group of German tourists talking animatedly about the southern rights they'd seen that morning on the guided marine walk. Although I hadn't been as fortunate on my first evening jaunt, I was content to be in this magical place, far away from the hustle and bustle. I knew the whales were in the bay and that tomorrow I'd have another opportunity to catch a glimpse of these giants.

De Hoop ***REMAINS ONE OF THE*** *best land-based* ***WHALE-WATCHING*** *areas on* ***EARTH***

ABOVE Southern rights spend a lot of time close to the ocean's surface and can be easily identified by the calcified patches of skin that host cyamid amphipods (whale lice).

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Trip Planner

GETTING THERE

De Hoop is a three-hour drive from Cape Town and about two-and-a-half hours from the Cape Winelands. Take the N2 and then R319 through Bredasdorp. A shuttle service from Cape Town International Airport can also be arranged.

The exterior of the Cloete Suites, which were part of the original Dutch homestead.

De Hoop's Suites provide a comfortable stay with classic country charm.

Stay Here

DE HOOP COLLECTION
Cape Country Routes manages the De Hoop Collection accommodation in the reserve, with something to suit every desire and budget, from campsites overlooking the vlei to rustic rondavels, cottages, larger houses and the more luxurious De Hoop Suites. The Cape Dutch-style suites have a comfortable country finish with four-poster beds, Victorian baths and solid wood floors. If you stay in the suites, your meals are served at the nearby Fig Tree restaurant (which has an incredibly impressive wine collection), while the other accommodation options allow for self-catering. There are also two pools on-site, a family pool near the tennis court and the pool overlooking the vlei, which provides a more tranquil setting.
Email ***info@dehoopcollection.co.za*** or visit ***dehoopcollection.com***

Eland drink at the edge of the vlei.

Do This

Visit the **Cape Vulture Colony** to get close to the Western Cape's last remaining colony of Cape vultures in the Potberg section of the reserve. A short hike from the parking area will take you to the vulture viewing deck. Bring binoculars to study the vultures perched on craggy ledges nearby and to get a better sighting as they glide overhead on the thermals.

The **Eco Boat Trip** is a relaxing way to spend a couple of hours on the vlei. Your guide will point out birds and wildlife as they flit across the water or come to the edge to drink. Warm drinks and pastries are served on the morning cruises, while savoury snacks and a bar service are available in the afternoon.

It's a short 1km hike from the Cape vulture viewing deck back to the vehicle, in the Postberg section of the reserve.

You can immerse yourself in nature on one of the many **hiking, trail running and mountain biking trails** at De Hoop. If you don't have your own mountain bike, you can hire one. Some of the trails are slightly rocky or sandy at times but the terrain is moderately easy to navigate, and you'll get to experience parts of the reserve that you can't reach by car.

A guided interpretive marine walk takes place an hour before low tide each day and you can often spot whales as you walk towards the rock pools during whale season. ■

The mountain biking trails provide an excellent way to explore the fynbos-carpeted landscape and get close to the reserve's wildlife.

PHOTOGRAPHY GALLO/GETTY IMAGES, ELISE KIRSTEN, PEET MOCKE/HMIMAGES.CO.ZA

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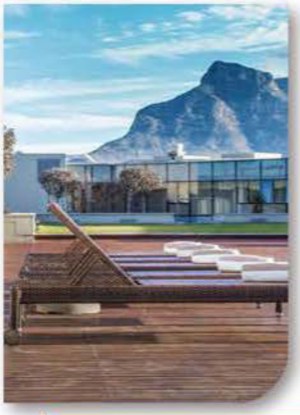

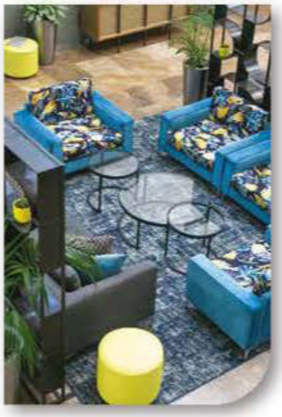

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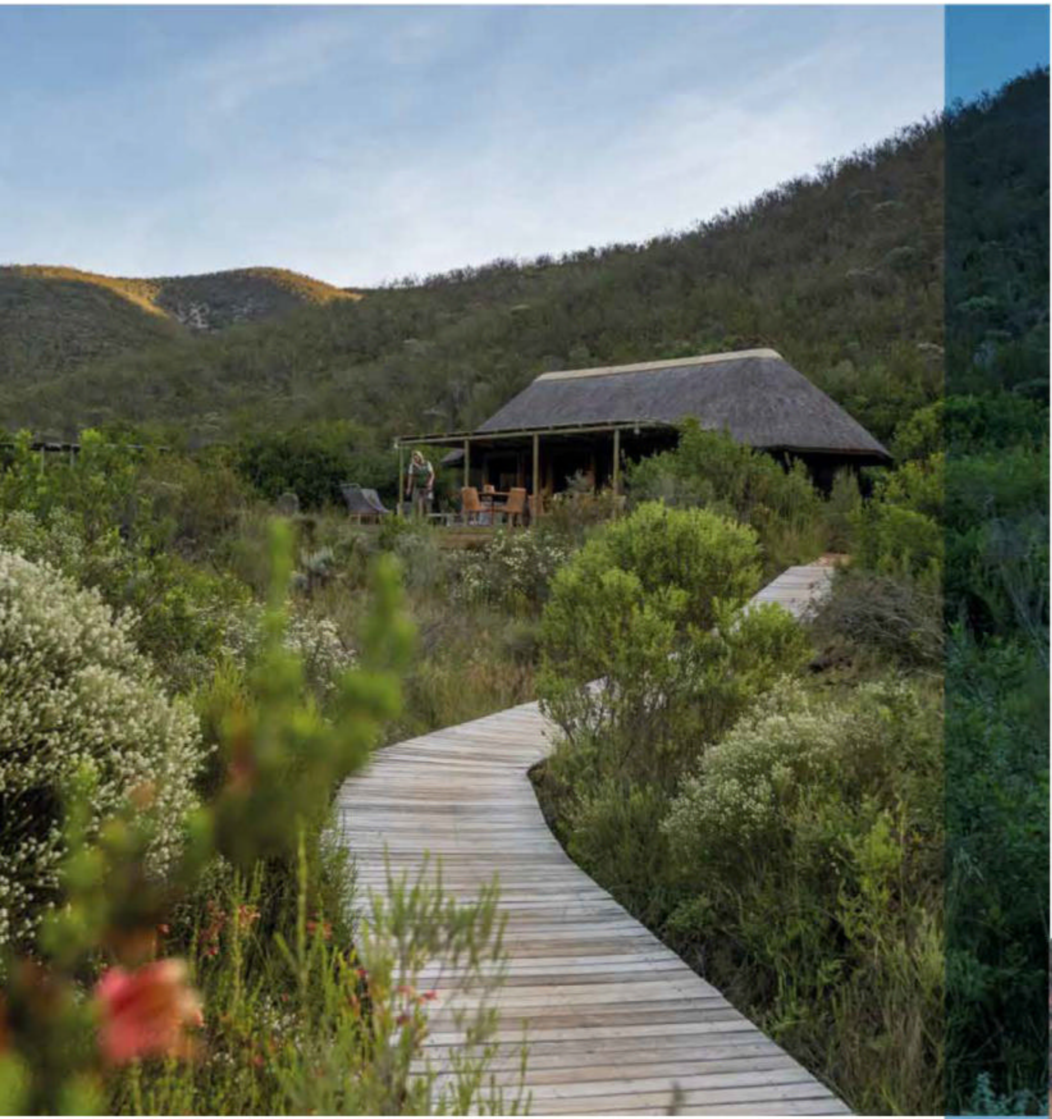

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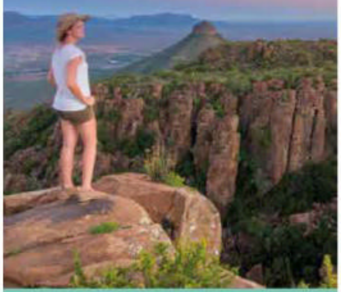

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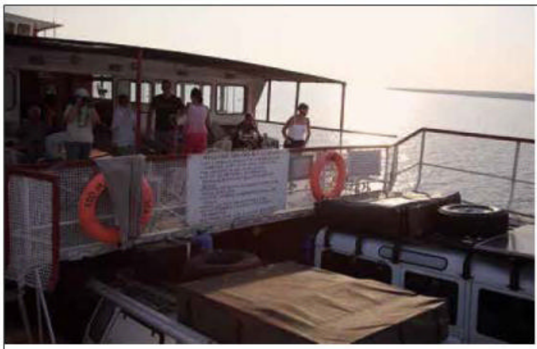

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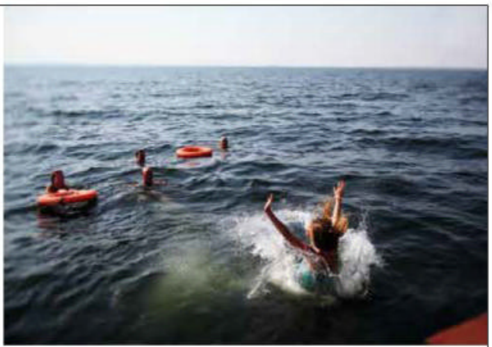

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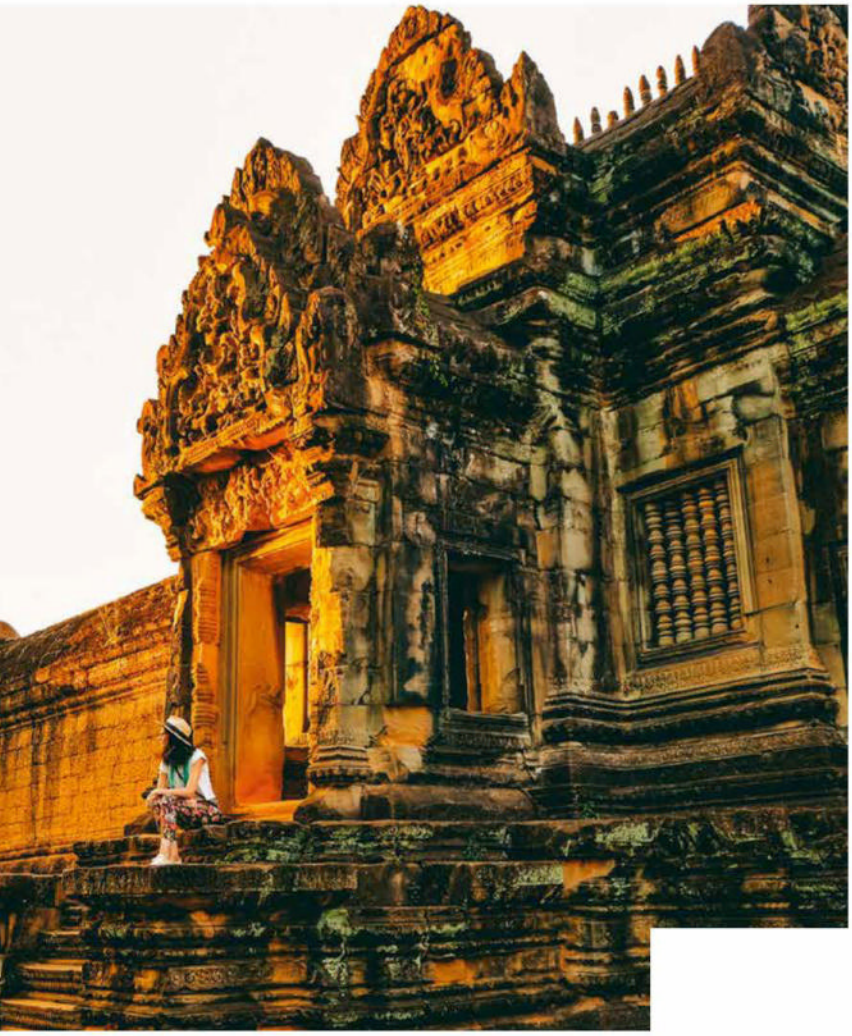

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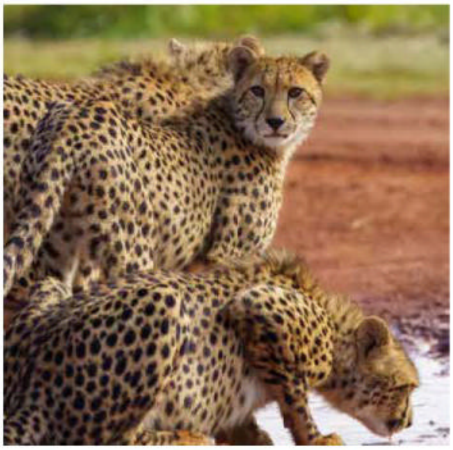

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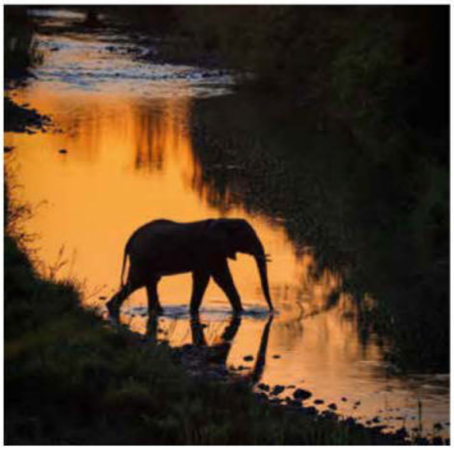

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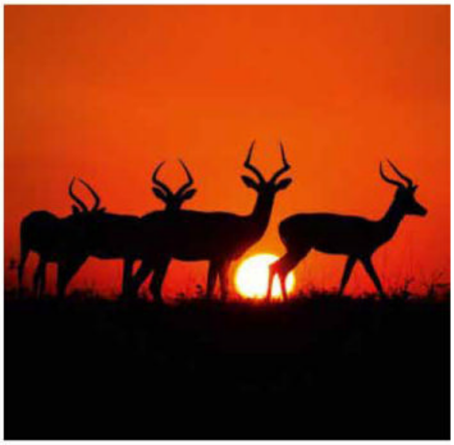
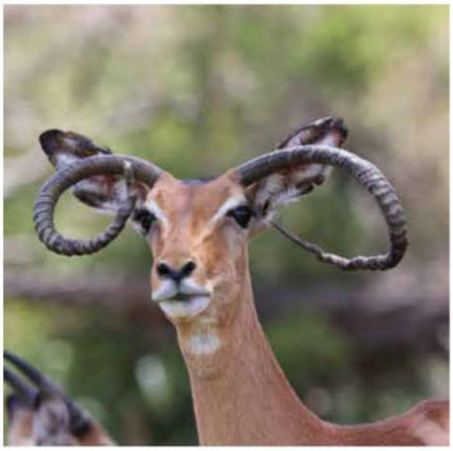
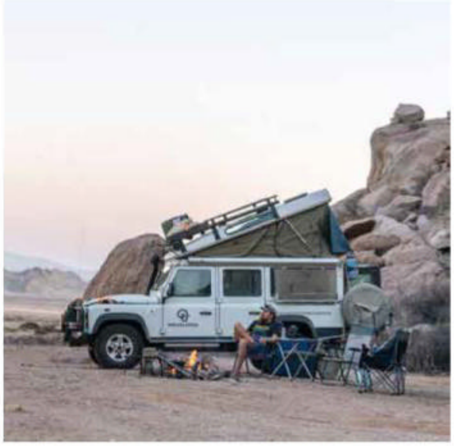
@heinrich_neumeyer
Amakhosi Private Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal



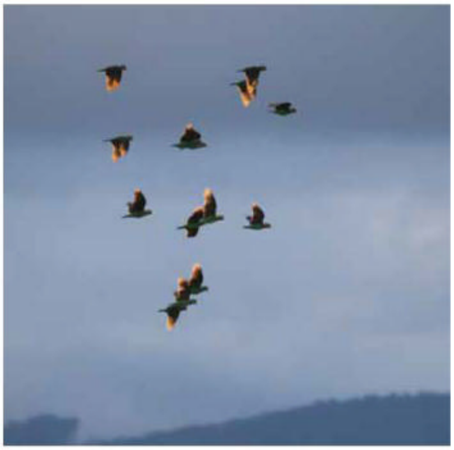
Adam Parker
@thewildparker
MalaMala Game Reserve



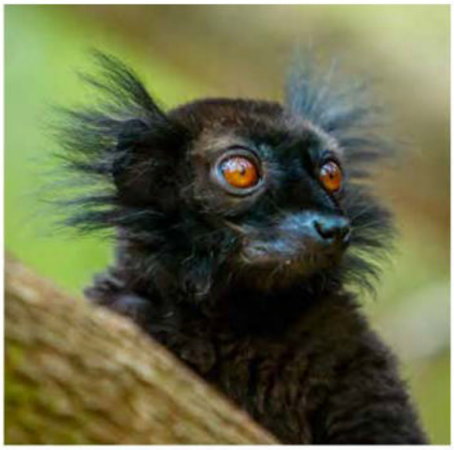
Gabriella Shipman
@gabs_wildlifephotography
Kruger National Park



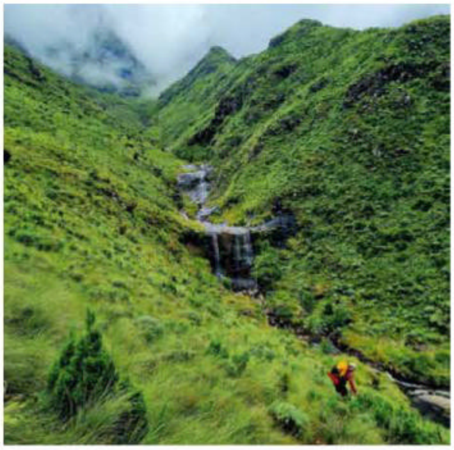
Quintin Rutherford
@quinrutherford
Richtersveld, Northern Cape



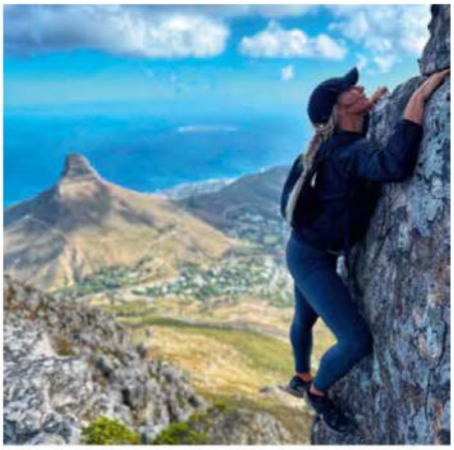
Michael Henshall
@bushlifemike
Tzaneen, Limpopo



Alexander Aitkenhead
@alexander_aitkenhead
Anja Community Reserve, Madagascar



Yair Schkolne
@yaya_goes_places
Mlambonja Pass, Drakensberg



Estelle Bond
@mountain_barbie._chronicles
Table Mountain, Cape Town

News and Views From the Final Frontier...

WE RECENTLY SHARED AN ARTICLE ONLINE ABOUT A CAPE COBRA THAT SURPRISED A PILOT MID-FLIGHT.

And Here's What You Said...

Elspeth Harvey
Wonderful pilot. Stayed calm and in control when he needed to.

Sandi Kaufman Elkington
Ladiessssss and gentlemen, thissss issss your captain ssssspeaking! Hectic!

Andrea Smit
Snakes on a plane!

Elsabe Van der Walt
I'd get out mid-air and walk the rest of the way.

Richard Catto
Did it have a boarding pass? Economy or business? 'Sir, I need you to take your seat now. I can't serve you more than two units of alcohol on this flight.' 'Sssss.' 'Captain, we have an unruly passenger.'

SOCIAL MEDIA

We asked:

What's one thing you always pack on a flight and why?

Noise-cancelling headphones. You only forget them once to realise never to leave home without them.
Lucinda Evert

An extra set of clothing in my hand luggage in case airlines lose my luggage.
Lisa De Bruin Keech

Earphones, earplugs and a jack in case the online entertainment doesn't work.
Carol Wood

Condoms ... to put on the end of my rifle in case it rains.
Mart Botha

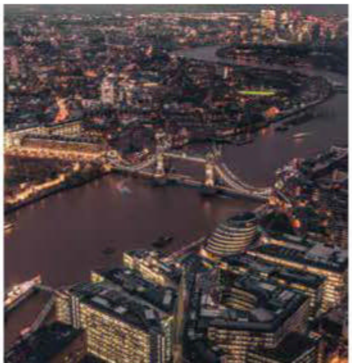
Hard copies of visas and bookings in case my phone runs out of juice!
Margot Penstone

Cheat mode on. A pouch with everything from the previous comments, plus Loperamide.
Frederic Caille

Caught in the Web

Bison bounce back
Deb Haaland, the first Native American to serve as a US cabinet secretary, has ordered the return of bison to tribal lands and the restoration of the grasslands they depend on to reconnect the powerful sacred animal to its natural habitat, returning stewardship to the original caretakers. American bison, also known as buffalo, were almost driven to extinction in the 1800s due to commercial hunting. As many as 60 million bison once roamed North America and were central to the culture and survival of numerous Native American groups. Today, while the bison population has bounced back, the animals remain absent from most of the grasslands they once occupied, and many tribes have struggled to restore their deep historical connections to the animals. While some US states have opposed the reintroduction of bison, 82 tribes now have more than 20 000 bison in 65 herds, with numbers growing in recent years along with the desire among Native Americans to reclaim stewardship of the animals. 'This holistic effort will ensure this powerful sacred animal is reconnected to its natural habitat and the original stewards who know best how to care for it,' Haaland says. 'When we think about Indigenous communities, we must acknowledge that they have spent generations over many centuries observing the seasons, tracking wildlife migration patterns, and fully comprehending our role in the delicate balance of this Earth.'

Happy Fins
Finland has been named the happiest country in the world for the sixth consecutive year by the United Nations, and now 10 lucky people have the chance to experience the country's unique happiness for themselves. From 12 – 15 June, Finland is offering a free four-day Masterclass of Happiness to 10 people through the Finding Your Inner Finn programme at the luxury Kuru Resort in Finland's Lake District. Participants will stay in private villas surrounded by pine forests and breathtaking views. Activities include exploring the Lake District, immersing in Finnish culture and spending quality time with nature. The entire trip is free, but participants must be fluent in English, outgoing, open-minded and comfortable being filmed for *Visit Finland*'s advertising. To apply, individuals must complete an application form and a social media challenge by sharing a post on Instagram or TikTok explaining why they want to participate and what makes them believe they might secretly be Finnish. ●



Winner!

Theo van Rooyen has won a two-night stay for two at Last Word Kitara in the Kleserie worth R34 000.
'Wow, this is a wonderful prize,' said Theo. 'I look forward to this breakaway. Thank you *Getaway* magazine!'

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY IMAGES

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